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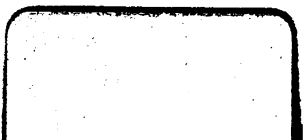

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DEACON JOHN WHITMAN

Taken at the age of

107

John Whitman

Written at the age of

107

THE CHRISTIAN PATRIARCH.

A MEMOIR

OF

DEACON JOHN WHITMAN;

WHO DIED AT EAST BRIDGEWATER, MASS., JULY, MDCCCXLII,
AT THE ADVANCED AGE OF ONE HUNDRED AND SEVEN
YEARS AND THREE MONTHS.

BY

REV. JASON WHITMAN;

PASTOR OF THE SECOND UNITARIAN SOCIETY, PORTLAND, ME.

"Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

BOSTON:

WILLIAM CROSBY AND CO.

1843.

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MEMOIR.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION. DESCENT, AND EARLY LIFE OF DEACON WHITMAN.

THE simple fact, that an individual has, at the present day, lived and enjoyed, in some good degree, his faculties, both bodily and mental, for more than one hundred years, is, of itself, adapted to awaken, in the minds of most, a curiosity to know something of the man, of his modes and habits of life, of his peculiar temperament, circumstances, and character. This very natural curiosity has been somewhat extensively manifested in regard to the subject of this memoir. During the latter years of his life, Deacon Whitman received hundreds of visits from persons who were entire strangers to him, and who were prompted to call upon him, by no other motive, than a desire to see one, who had reached so great an age. It has been thought that this natural and unobjectionable curiosity might be gratified by a short

memoir. And yet, this work would never have been undertaken, amid a multiplicity of other engagements, merely to gratify a laudable curiosity. The character of Deacon Whitman was, in some respects, marked and peculiar. The writer, in common with many others, has felt, that, if that character could be truly and faithfully portrayed, the representation might exert a favorable influence upon the community, especially upon that extensive and important portion of the community, sometimes denominated the middle class of society, to which Deacon Whitman belonged. The memorials of men of this class are seldom made public. And when they are, those individuals are usually selected as the subjects of them, who, by great intellectual ability and energy, or by untiring industry and perseverance, have raised themselves from the station in which they were born, and become prominent in society. The influence of such memorials, although good on the whole, is not entirely free from a tendency to evil. While they teach what talent and industry may achieve, there is danger that they will awaken feelings of dissatisfaction with the humble virtues, the common duties and the quiet scenes of ordinary life, and excite a restless ambition for prominence and distinction among men. There is danger that the young, who may be induced to imitate the examples placed before them in such memorials, will be led to regard greatness rather than goodness as the true object of life. It is hoped that the influence of the following memoir may be of a different character, that it will show that, even in

the ordinary walks of life, if there be godliness and contentment, great respectability of character may be maintained, and much christian happiness enjoyed. Deacon Whitman was never a learned man, nor did he ever become prominent in public life. His possessions were small, never sufficient to class him with the wealthy, and yet always enough to raise him above indigence. His advantages for early education were extremely limited. He never manifested a disposition to crowd himself into public offices, either civil or military. He was a quiet, unobtrusive, home man; a mechanic and a farmer. He was industrions, frugal, and temperate in all things. He was contented with his station in society, happy with his lot in life, and grateful for the many blessings he enjoyed. By improving his leisure time in reading, he became a man of more than ordinary intelligence. He enjoyed, through his long life, the respect of the community in which he dwelt, and, in his christain faith, his religious experiences, and his well-grounded hopes, he enjoyed much support and happiness. His example, then, seems to be just what is needed at the present time, when a feverish excitement, a desire to do some great thing, an anxiety to be hastily rich, pervades almost the whole community. Then too, in his religious character, there was a union of firmness and decision in regard to his own opinions, with a charitable liberality towards those who differed from him, and a devotion to practical godliness, as of far more importance than accuracy of speculative opinion, or vividness of religious

feeling, which may render a memorial of him not altogether useless to the christian community, at this time of religious excitement and sectarian exclusiveness. It is, therefore, for the purpose of gratifying a natural and laudable curiosity, in the hope of holding up to the community an example worthy of imitation, and with the filial desire of commemorating the virtues of a revered father, that this memoir has been undertaken.

Whether peculiarities of intellectual and moral character are transmitted from father to son, down a long line of successive generations, is a question, which it is not necessary here to discuss. That the characteristics of parents and ancestors are often reproduced in children and descendants, through the power of example or by some other influence, is undoubtedly true. In tracing the character of an individual, therefore, it becomes interesting, at least, if not important, to know something of those from whom he traces his descent. The following sketch of the ancestors of Deacon John Whitman, together with remarks upon their characters, and upon the influence which an acquaintance with them should exert upon their descendants, is from another pen.

Deacon John Whitman, the subject of this memoir, was a descendant of John Whitman, one of the early settlers of the town of Weymouth, Massachusetts, and who is the ancestor, if not of all, yet of nearly all, of the name of Whitman in this country. John Whitman, the ancestor, must have arrived in this country some time previous to December, 1638,

when, as appears by Winthrop's Journal, he was made free, or admitted to the rights and privileges of a citizen. This was not usually admissible until after a probationary residence of some time, and never, until after admission to some established church. He was, by the governor and assistants, appointed ensign there in 1645, and in the same year, by the same authority, he, with two others, was appointed "to end small controversies" there. What authority was exercised under the latter commission is not precisely known, but probably not very dissimilar to that which was subsequently expected of justices of the peace. He was also deacon of the church there, probably, from its first establishment until his death, which was on November 13th, 1692. He must have lived to a very advanced age, probably but little if any short of 90 years. He was undoubtedly a worthy man. His enterprise had brought him to a new country, probably with but little, if any estate. He had, like most adventurers into a new country, his own fortune to achieve. The wilderness was alone open to him. An undaunted resolution must have urged him forward. His wife and several children had been left in the country from which he had migrated, three thousand miles of ocean intervening between them. His only hope of again rejoining them, with emotions of unalloyed felicity, depended on his ability to carve, from the wilderness, the sources of a comfortable existence. Affection, on the one hand, and almost desperation, on the other, stimulated his exertions. Joy and sadness must have

alternated in his breast, as the idols of his affection, or the prospect before him, were uppermost in his mind. Years had elapsed, before he could be allowed to realize that the day of anxiety and solicitude had passed away. In 1641, however, according to traditionary account, the measure of his felicity was made full, by the arrival of his family, and their establishment on the venerated spot, in the town of Weymouth, where he had unremitingly toiled, in anticipation of this consummation of his fondest hopes. There he would seem to have been trebly blessed, with competency, offspring, and length of days; his competency the fruit of industry, his offspring the gift of heaven, and his length of days the reward of temperance and virtue.

In him, his posterity have an example worthy of imitation. His virtues were not of the obtrusive kind, nor adapted to catch the popular admiration. He was, probably, incapable of exploits that would astonish the crowd, or, if he was, his ambition did not prompt the attempt. Many a man has been lauded to the skies for the tricks of a mere mountebank, without one single virtue to recommend him. Nine-tenths of the heroes of all times are of this order. Such is human nature, so prone to the marvellous, to be dazzled with external show and pomp, to be blinded by it and utterly reckless of what is simple, amiable, and really praiseworthy.

But John Whitman, the ancestor, who feared God and hated covetousness, who did good continually, all the days of a long life, who, by honest industry,

and without offence to any one, nurtured and educated a large family, and fitted them to become citizens worthy of any country, who was an exemplar to all around him, who braved and endured hardships which but few can realize, and finally, who fulfilled every civil, religious, and moral obligation, must not be forgotten by his numerous posterity. His virtues should be their virtues, and his history should be deeply graven upon their minds. To reverence and venerate our ancestors would seem to be but an instinct of nature. At any rate, it is the dictate of humanity, in every form of existence, from the most savage to the most civilized state, and so ordered for wise purposes. From veneration imitation if not emulation will follow. Let us cherish and not endeavor to extinguish this propensity. *Let us honor our progenitors, that our days may be many in the land which the Lord our God hath given us.*

Thomas Whitman, the eldest son of the above named John, was about twelve years old, when he came over, in 1641, with his mother, and some others of the children. In 1656, he married and settled in Weymouth, near his father. But in 1662, he removed to Bridgewater, and settled in that part of the town, now known as East Bridgewater. The spot, selected by Thomas Whitman, lying between two rivers, was called Whitman's neck. It has, ever since, remained, or some portion of it, in the possession of the family. The first dwelling house was but a few rods in front of that, in which Deacon Whitman died.

The character of Thomas, like that of his father, must have been enterprising and adventurous, and his habits, those of industry and frugality. The estate, which he was enabled to parcel out among his children, was valuable. His privations, in early life, were those of a settler in a wilderness country, and his disasters, from Indian depredations and barbarity, were severely afflicting. Those, in succeeding generations, who have enjoyed, unmolested, the fruits of his labors, privations and sufferings, have, too often, neglected to call to mind, with filial reverence, the debt of gratitude due to such a progenitor.

Nicholas Whitman, the third son of Thomas, had his father's homestead and lived with him. He married, for his first wife, Sarah Vining of Weymouth. By her he had two sons, Thomas and John, the father of the subject of this memoir. Nicholas Whitman was a man of great vigor, industry and activity. He was born, about the time of the breaking out of Philip's war, in which his father's dwelling house, and other dwellings in that part of the town, were, according to tradition, destroyed by the Indians. This was a period of great distress and alarm. The settlements were sparse and wide apart. To come to the aid of each other, of a sudden, was difficult, and attended with danger. The progress of settlement was of course retarded, and privations were multiplied. Schools could not be established, and the children were but scantily furnished with the means of education. They were taught by their parents to read, but not, in many instances, to write.

Nicholas could doubtless read his Bible. But, if he could write at all, it was with difficulty. Possessing strong native powers, he was enabled to manage the common affairs of life to good advantage. Although his family was large, he increased his estate. He was a constant attendant upon public worship, although, for the greater part of his life, the place of meeting was three miles distant from him.

In his religious notions, he partook, in some measure, of the spirit of the times, and was somewhat pertinacious. He could not readily yield his assent to what, by the then rising generation, were deemed improvements, either in doctrine or ceremony. Whatever he had witnessed in the conduct of his forefathers, had, with him, the force of law. Accordingly, as it is related of him, having grown up while it was fashionable, owing probably to the open and unfinished state of the meeting house in early times, for the men to put on their hats during sermon time, he could not readily brook innovation in this particular. This practice had existed, about fifty years, during the whole of the ministry of the first settled minister. After which, his successor, a fashionable young man from the metropolis, was able to persuade all but Mr. Whitman to lay it aside. Finding him contumacious, he delivered a discourse upon the subject. But, before he had finished, Mr. Whitman arose, and with great gravity, and, possibly, without intending a sarcasm, remarked that, *rather than offend a weak brother*, he would pull off his hat, and accordingly did so, thereafter, as well during the sermon as the prayer.

John Whitman, the second son of Nicholas, and father of the subject of this memoir, had a portion of his father's estate, including the part on which his grandfather Thomas had his dwelling-house. By his first wife, Mary Richards, he had no children. By a second wife, Elizabeth Carey, he had Samuel and John, the subject of our notice. He was regular in his habits, and pious, but not very laborious; sufficiently so, however, to maintain his family, and to keep his patrimony together until, in his old age, his son John took charge of it, and of the maintenance of the old gentleman and an enfeebled sister.

On the maternal side, Deacon Whitman was the fourth, in descent, from Captain Miles Standish, the renowned soldier, shield and defence of the Pilgrims, who came over in the May Flower, in 1620. The descent is thus traced — Josiah, the third son of Captain Miles Standish, settled in Bridgewater. Mary Standish, daughter of Josiah, married James Carey. Their daughter, Elizabeth Carey, married John Whitman, and was the mother of the subject of this memoir. From this sketch of the descent of Deacon Whitman, and of the character of his ancestors, we should expect to find him a man of sterling worth, but of unobtrusive manners. This expectation will not, it is thought, be disappointed by an exact delineation of his character.

Deacon Whitman was born in the year 1735, on the 17th of March, old style. By the change of eleven days from the old to the new style, his birth-

day occurred on the 28th of March. He was born of humble, devout, and pious parents. It was their endeavor to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They early gave their son to God, in the ordinance of baptism, and instructed him, to the best of their ability, in the truths and principles, the duties and spirit of the Christian religion. Deacon Whitman always bore this circumstance in grateful remembrance, and often spoke of it, in the language of strong and deep feeling. At the advanced age of eighty-eight, in sketching some reminiscences of his life, he commences with expressions of gratitude to God that he had been blessed with pious parents, and permitted to enjoy the privileges of early religious training. His language is as follows: "And first, I would be sincerely thankful, that I was born in a land of Gospel light and liberty, and of religious parents, who early gave me to God in baptism. My mother instructed me in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, and gave me good counsel, but was early taken from me." His father soon married again, his third wife. His step-mother, he says, was a very worthy woman. "I have seen her," he adds, "on her knees in the old closet, at her secret prayers. My grandfather, also, I have seen, at his secret prayers, leaning over the ladder in the barn, when I went over there early in the morning." And he expresses the hope that these circumstances, slight though they would seem to be, were blessed, in the good Providence of God, to his spiritual improvement.

The parents of Deacon Whitman, as has been already hinted, were not among the wealthy, nor yet among the indigent. His father could leave no pecuniary inheritance to be divided among his children. He could only train them to habits of industry and frugality, teach them the principles of the christian religion, and commend them to the God of all grace. This inheritance, of correct principles and good habits, was probably of more benefit to them, in after life, than any amount of property, which he could have left them. The advantages enjoyed by Deacon Whitman, in his earlier years, for the acquisition of knowledge and the improvement of his mind, were very limited. An attendance at the common town school, as it was at that early period of our history, for a few weeks during the severity of winter, and only for a very few years, constituted the amount of his advantages for education. In these occasional opportunities, and mere snatches of time, so enjoyed as necessarily to render his efforts desultory, he could not make much proficiency in any branch of study. And, if, by the term education be meant only the instructions of school, Deacon Whitman might almost be regarded as an uneducated man. And yet, through his own after exertions, he acquired knowledge sufficient to fit him for all ordinary business, sufficient even to fit him for the transaction of much of the public business of the town in which he resided. And not only so: He became a very extensive and intelligent reader, acquired much general knowledge, and was able to converse understandingly

and profitably upon all the various topics of discourse that would ordinarily occur in society.

Deacon Whitman lived with his father until he was over seventeen years of age. The period had then arrived, when he must begin to make preparation for the active duties of life, when, as he had no prospective inheritance on which to rely, he must qualify himself for self-support. He made choice of a mechanical pursuit, and went to learn the trade of a "shop-joiner," as it was then called. But at that time, there was not the division of labor which has since been introduced, and he worked, while learning his trade, and ever after, as much perhaps in the capacity of a house-carpenter, as in that of a shop-joiner. He was placed as an apprentice with Deacon Carey, of North Bridgewater, a relative of his mother. Deacon Carey was quite poor, and carried on his business in a small way. The advantages which Deacon Whitman enjoyed while with him, either for education or for becoming skilled in his trade, were very limited. And his fare, too, was what would be regarded by the young men of the present day as somewhat hard and trying. He was often compelled to sleep in unfinished apartments, with open crevices, through which the wind and snow entered. His food was of the coarsest kind. Boiled salt beef and pork for dinner, the liquid, in which it was boiled, thickened with a little Indian meal, or a few beans, for supper and breakfast, was his bill of fare, sometimes for nearly three months in the winter. But he did not complain. The family,

in which he lived, were in comparatively indigent circumstances; they were very kind to him, and he fared as well as his master. "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." Deacon Carey was a truly religious man. He and his wife both sought to walk blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, and to train up their household, whether children or apprentices, in the ways of truth and Godliness. It is striking to observe that Deacon Whitman, instead of complaining of the hardships which he endured while an apprentice, ever spoke, with apparently heartfelt gratitude, of the advantages he then enjoyed. He says, in his sketches, "I had the *privilege* of living in a religious family, which is a great favor. Order and family worship were kept up. I learned to keep steadily at work, and got so much of a trade as was a great benefit to me in after life. I finished my apprenticeship in peace and love with the whole family." It should here be observed, that Deacon Whitman ever retained the friendship of this family, and ever retained an affectionate regard for them. He highly enjoyed, even at the later periods of his life, a social visit from the children of the master of his apprenticeship. How different was his estimate of the advantages of his sojourn with Deacon Carey, from what most would put upon them. His advantages for education were nothing, his opportunities for becoming skilled in the trade he went to learn were very inferior, his fare was coarse, his labor was hard. But he

experienced the treatment prompted by true-hearted affection and christian kindness. There was religious order in the family. There was a daily assembling around the altar of domestic worship. There was an opportunity to form good moral habits. These, with him, far outweighed all the disadvantages of his situation.

During his apprenticeship, there occurred a great religious awakening, under the ministrations of that celebrated itinerant preacher George Whitfield, and others of his class. The regular pastors of the day were somewhat divided in opinion as to the propriety of Whitfield's course. Rev. Mr. Porter, of North Bridgewater, was of the number who favored Whitfield. Deacon Whitman, was, therefore, placed, thus early in life, in the midst of a religious excitement. He heard Whitfield preach several times, and was so deeply impressed, as to be able to repeat, from recollection, even after he was an hundred years old, the outlines of one of his sermons. His early thoughtfulness upon the subject of religion was, by the circumstances in which he was placed, much increased. He was not, however, carried away by the excitement around him. He was not numbered and enrolled among Whitfield's converts. He received deep religious impresssions, which gave a new impulse to his serious reflections, and it should be numbered among the influences which resulted in his entire consecration of himself, in after life, to the service of God, in an open profession of his faith in Christ. His own account of the influence of this

period, and of the circumstances in which he was placed, upon his character, is truly modest and characteristic. After speaking with gratitude of his early religious training, and of his having seen his stepmother and his grandfather in secret prayer, he adds. "These examples, together with a great stir by Mr. George Whitfield and other travelling preachers, excited in me some serious concern for my own everlasting happiness, and engaged me in the practice of secret prayer, in which practice I have ever since lived, but without regard to any particular form or place ; sometimes with great coldness and remissness, but I hope generally in sincerity, sometimes in a camp, sometimes lodged in a barn, and sometimes in the open air."

CHAPTER II.

ENTRANCE INTO ACTIVE LIFE AND MODE OF LIVING.

Deacon Whitman had now completed his apprenticeship. Without property — with but a very limited education — and an imperfect acquaintance with the trade, even, which he had attempted to learn, but with correct principles and good habits, he sets forth upon the journey of life, depending upon his own hands, and his own energies. He leaves Deacon Carey and goes to work for Capt. Daniel Noyes of Abington, an adjoining town. But the times were dull, and the prospects of the country were dark. The old French war, as it has been called, was at that time raging; a war between France and England, in regard to the possession of some portion of the American territory. America, therefore, became the theatre of the war. England called upon her colonies to assist her in the contest. An expedition was set on foot against Crown Point. Each captain of a company of militia was required to furnish his quota of soldiers. These were to be obtained, if possible, by voluntary enlistments. But if the quota was not filled by a certain hour of a certain day, the offi-

cers were directed to draft the required number. Deacon Whitman was of the number of the drafted, he, therefore, left the peaceful pursuit of his mechanical labors, repaired to Boston, passed muster, and was enrolled for the expedition. But he had no military ardor, and was not possessed of a warlike spirit. He was, from the first, and through his whole life, a man of peace. Yet he held himself bound to perform faithfully his duties to his country. He was, therefore, ready to enter the army, when she required his services there, while, at the same time, he rejoiced to be excused, if possible, from services of that character. After he had passed muster and been enrolled, his elder brother Samuel, who had accumulated a little property from his earnings, went to Boston and furnished him with the means of hiring some one to take his place in the army; he joyfully returned with his brother, and again engaged in his mechanical pursuits. The times, however, were exceedingly dull. But little employment was to be obtained, and but small compensation even for that little. But Deacon Whitman dreaded idleness. He regarded it as the fruitful source of vices, that were destructive of happiness and ruinous to character. He rejoiced to obtain good employment and high wages, if possible. But, if this could not be done, he would not remain idle. He would still keep at work, and take such compensation as he could obtain. This was his principle, adopted early in life, adhered to through his whole protracted earthly pilgrimage, and impressed upon his children with an affectionate

earnestness. In accordance with this principle, he did not remain idle at the period now spoken of, although he obtained next to nothing for his labor. In his own sketches, to which allusion has already been made, he says, "I obtained the best business I could, and kept at work *all my time*, but could get the promise of no money, so that when my shirts were worn out and the summer had passed, and the winter was fast approaching, I had not received money enough for my whole summer's labor to buy a new pair of shirts. However, by the help of friends and by doing the best I was able, I kept myself comfortable. And by diligence in business and prudence in expenses, blessed as I was with a comfortable degree of health, by slow degrees I got something beforehand. By the time I was twenty-seven years of age, I had laid up something considerable, near five hundred dollars."

About this time Deacon Whitman was at work for a Mr. Eleazer Washburn of East Bridgewater. Mr. Washburn's eldest son had spent some years in the Jerseys, as the state of New Jersey was then called. Young Washburn was pleased with the country, and thought that his prospects for life would be better there than in Massachusetts. Then, too, his sister was about to be married to a Mr. Byram, who had removed from Bridgewater and settled in the Jerseys. These circumstances induced young Washburn to return to the Jerseys, with the view of locating himself permanently there. Deacon Whitman learning that mechanical labor was in more demand, and that

higher wages were given there, than in Massachusetts, and, as is natural with young men, having a desire to see the country, concluded to accompany young Washburn, with whom he had become closely united in the strong bonds of a most intimate friendship. He remained in the Jerseys two summers and one winter. During the time which he spent there, he was perhaps more tried in his feelings than he had been at any previous period. Washburn, his young friend and companion, Washburn's uncle and aunt Byram, and two others in the family, were cut off, during the winter, by death. Deacon Whitman was, therefore, much with the sick and the dying. Such scenes could not be without their appropriate effect upon one of his serious and thoughtful turn, in impressing upon his mind a deep feeling of the uncertainty of life, and of the importance of being ever prepared for death. In his own modest way he speaks of the trial, and says, that he hopes that it had some good effect upon his mind.

He had serious thoughts of remaining permanently in the Jerseys, and probably would have done so, had he not been strongly urged by his friends to return to Bridgewater. His father had buried his third wife. He was now advanced in life, being sixty-three years of age, was lonesome, felt unable to carry on his farm alone, and wished for some one on whom he could lean, as the infirmities of age should increase. Then, too, Deacon Whitman had a sister, whose mental powers had been weakened by disease, so that she was not capable of taking care of herself. He says,

"Upon the most serious consideration I was able to give the subject, I concluded to settle at home with my father and a sickly sister, who was troubled with fits. Although my father's estate was small, it was thought proper that I should pay out something considerable, take a deed of the whole, and give bond for my father's and sister's support through life, and for their decent burial, which I accordingly did."

Having completed his arrangements with his father in regard to the estate, and become located for life, Deacon Whitman began to experience the truth of the declaration that "it is not good for man to be alone," and was therefore prompted to seek for a help-mate. But the account of his courtship and marriage can be given in no way so well, as in his own brief but delicate and expressive words. He says, "I made an acquaintance with Miss Lydia Snow, which was agreeable to us, and to the connections on both sides. We were married October 11th, 1764." Soon after his own marriage, his father was desirous of marrying a fourth wife. This proposition, after Deacon Whitman had given bond for the support of his father and a sickly sister through life, so that the expense of another added to the family would be his loss, would have aroused many, situated as he was, to open and determined opposition to the step. Not so with Deacon Whitman, who seems to have thought less of himself, and of his pecuniary prospects, than of making the declining years of his father happy. He made no opposition to his father's marriage. A fourth wife, therefore, aged, poor and destitute, was

brought into the family. The father and the step-mother lived together nearly twenty years under the same roof, but in a separate family, supported wholly by the son. The remarks of Deacon Whitman himself in regard to this transaction and its results exhibit his character very clearly and distinctly, in one of its aspects. He says, "My father married the widow Mitchell of Abington, a woman within eighteen days of his own age. She was poor and sickly, of a christian character and profession. My father and step-mother made a family by themselves. Having many relations and acquaintances, and being much at leisure, they had considerable company, which made the expense of the family much more than if my father had lived single. However, we lived in peace, and got along very well." Afterwards, when his own family had become quite large, he refers to the subject again. "My carpenter business failing, my family increasing, and my father and step-mother continuing in life to a great age, my outgoes were more than my income, so that I was obliged to sell some of my land. I began, therefore, to be at a loss, whether I was right in so easily consenting to my father's last marriage, which was after I had agreed to pay out a certain sum and to take care of him and a sickly sister through life. However, *I aimed to do right at the time. And I have never been willing to do that which was unjust in order to lay up for my children.*"

During the first year after his marriage with Miss Lydia Snow, Mr. Whitman and his wife gave them-

selves up, to use his own language, to the full communion of the church of Christ in East Bridgewater. They had their children baptized, as they were born, endeavoring, as he himself says, to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly.

Deacon Whitman had three children by this marriage, Lydia, who married Ebenezer Whitman, of Windsor, Mass.; Elizabeth, who married a Mr. Trowbridge of Middleboro', Mass.; and James, who settled in Belchertown, Mass. The two daughters are dead. The son is still living. Deacon Whitman was called to part with his wife April 25, 1771. He speaks of this day as one never to be forgotten by him, when his beloved wife and dearest earthly enjoyment was taken from him by death. I was left, he adds, with my aged parents and three small children, in which lonesome condition, I continued about two years, when I concluded a matrimonial connection with Miss Abigail Whitman, and we were married August 5th, 1775.

Deacon Whitman had eleven children by this marriage. Catherine, who died young; Bathsheba, who is still living unmarried; Josiah, who settled in Wellfleet, but now resides upon the old place in East Bridgewater; Alfred, who lived with his father, took care of him in his old age, and died within a fortnight after his father's decease; Obadiah, who resides in New Gloucester, Me.; Nathaniel, who was settled as pastor of the first church and society in Billerica, Mass., but is now pastor of the Unitarian society in

Calais, Me.; Hosea, who resides in Waltham, Mass.; John, who settled in Belchertown, Mass., and died early; Abigail, who died early in life; Bernard, who was the pastor of a Unitarian society in Waltham, but is now dead; and Jason, who was settled as the pastor of the Unitarian society in Saco, Me., but is now pastor of the second Unitarian Society in Portland, Me.

Soon after his marriage with his second wife he was chosen deacon of the church, of which he was a member. The duties of this office he continued to perform, until the death of his colleague, and his own advanced age, rendered it proper that younger and more active men should be appointed to the office.

At the commencement of the revolutionary war, Deacon Whitman was chosen lieutenant of a company of militia, under Capt. Alden, which office he held until the close of the war. He was called into the camp, however, only for three months, which he spent in Rhode Island, guarding the shores. He states, in his sketches, that he marched a second time on an alarm, but he seems to have been absent from his family but a short time. On one occasion the religious worship of the Sabbath was interrupted by the annunciation of the approach of the enemy upon the coast. The worshiping assembly left the house of prayer and repaired to their dwellings to make preparation for repelling the foe. When Deacon Whitman reached his house, he found the alarm had preceded him. His wife and another female who resided in the family, had heard the news

of the approach of the British upon the coast. But they did not yield themselves to despair. They nerved themselves for the emergency, and he found them busily employed in making cartridges, so as to expedite the departure of the males of the family to the scenes of conflict and danger. Such was the spirit of the times. And although Deacon Whitman was not called to serve his country in battle, amid bloodshed and carnage, yet, as one of the committee of safety, for the town in which he resided, he did all in his power to help forward, in a peaceful way, the cause of freedom.

He was occasionally called upon, in after life, to act as umpire in the disputes, which arose between neighbor and neighbor. He was for several years selectman, overseer of the poor, and assessor of taxes, in the town where he resided. He was always much respected, but his retiring disposition prevented him from being put forward into offices of distinction. His life was calm and quiet, passed principally in the bosom of his family, and affording but few striking incidents for the pen of biography.

The reader will not, it is presumed, much regret the want of incidents, if in their place he can be furnished with a somewhat detailed account of Deacon Whitman's mode of living. For the great curiosity which has been awakened in regard to him, seems to have had especial reference to this point. It has been a desire to know by what practices and habits he preserved his life and enjoyed his health to so

great an age. Did he eat animal food? Did he drink tea and coffee? Did he use tobacco or any form of intoxicating drinks? These, and a great variety of similar questions, have been often asked in regard to his mode of living.

To form a correct idea of his mode of living, in its relation to his life and health, it will be necessary to form clear conceptions of his circumstances, his temperament, and his principles. He was a mechanic and a farmer, constantly laboring, sometimes in the one and then again in the other of these pursuits. He had a large family of children to support, so that his annual expenses often exceeded his annual income. Consequently, he was compelled, every few years, to sell off a portion of his land, to pay up arrearages. He was not, it will be perceived, in a situation to indulge in a luxurious mode of living, had he been so disposed. Then, too, he was a man of remarkably even temperament, never greatly excited, never deeply depressed. His attachments were ardent and enduring, and his feelings tender and strong. Though easily moved, he was seldom, if ever, violently excited. He was not known, in the latter part of his life at least, if ever, to fly into a violent passion. It is doubtful whether, during a greater portion of his life, he was ever heard to utter a stronger expression than simply the words, "O strange," to express any emotion which he felt. Still further, the prevailing principle of his life was a religious devotion to God and to duty, connected with an unwavering trust in the wisdom and good-

ness of God's overruling Providence. He was never desirous of distinction, and therefore he escaped all the consuming fires of ambition. He was never anxious, either to be wealthy himself, or to leave his children wealthy, and consequently he was free from the distracting perplexities, and health-destroying influences of an eager pursuit after riches. His ruling motive seemed to be, to walk humbly, soberly, and righteously before God in the world, and to teach his children to serve the God of their Fathers. Such were his circumstances, his peculiarities of temperament, and his principles.

The influence of his circumstances, his temperament, and his principles was manifested in all the details of his conduct. His hour of rising in the morning was at a medium point, between what might be called very early and very late. He was opposed to the use of artificial light in the morning, while, at the same time, he was unwilling to close his eyes upon that which God had provided. He, therefore, arose as soon as the light of day was sufficient for the ordinary purposes of labor. From rising, until breakfast, he employed himself in such *chores* as are common with the farmers of our country towns — in building the fires, providing wood and water for the day, in order to relieve the females of the family from unnecessary labor, and in taking care of the cattle. If there was nothing of this kind to employ him, still he found something to busy himself about, and so he kept diligently, but moderately, employed until breakfast. When breakfast was pre-

pared, the family were all assembled. Deacon Whitman read a portion of Scripture, and offered up at the family altar, a short and simple, but sincere and fervent prayer. After prayers he again recognized the hand of God in the supply of his temporal wants, as he seated himself at the table, and gave thanks as he arose therefrom, refreshed by the bounties of God's providence. He was then ready for the labors of the day. He had refreshed his body with food, had given thanks to God for his past mercies, and humbly besought a continuance of his blessings, and now he went out, in a religious frame of mind, to devote the day, diligently and faithfully, to the honest and honorable labors of his agricultural or mechanical pursuits. In regard to his mode of laboring, he was seldom, if ever, in haste, but always industrious. It has been said that he was never known to do a great day's work, one which might overtask his powers and break down his strength, and destroy his health, while it secured for him a reputation for astonishing feats of strength or activity. But, it has been added, there was no man, who performed more labor during the year than Deacon Whitman. Nor was this done by working late at night, or at unusual hours. He generally completed the labors of the day by the setting of the sun, and spent the evening with his family. The way in which he performed so much labor during the year, was by a diligent improvement of the time during the hours of broad daylight. He did not drive, he did not dally. He went straight forward, always

finding something to do, always diligently employed. This was not merely his course on some days, but on all days. If the weather was unfavorable to out-door labor, and he was confined by storm, still, he had some employment provided, that so he might not be compelled to spend even a rainy day in idleness. One portion of his labors as a mechanic, was bottoming chairs with the tall flag. And work of this kind he generally reserved for stormy weather, especially during many of the later years of his life. As he seated himself at the dinner or the supper table he invoked a blessing and returned thanks as he arose. He generally retired to rest soon after nine o'clock. But, before retiring, the family were assembled, the Scriptures were read, the prayer was offered, and thus he laid himself down for repose, his body moderately wearied by appropriate but not excessive labor, at peace with his own conscience, with the circumstances of his life, with his fellow men, and with a cheerful confiding trust in the care and protection of a kind father's love. The description of a single day is the description of his general course. Rising with the dawn of light, reading of the Scriptures and prayer at the family altar, morning and evening, three frugal meals with the invocation of God's blessing and the returning of thanks at each, the diligent employment of the time, as it passed, in healthful labor, and the early retiring to rest, these regularly marked his days, as they succeeded each other, contributing to his health of body, his cheerfulness of heart, and his peace of conscience.

In regard to his food and drink, Deacon Whitman thought less, probably, than most persons. He was generally blessed with a good appetite, and ate freely, though moderately, of what was placed before him, provided it was wholesome. He was never heard to express, beforehand, his anxiety as to what the next meal might be, or to speak with interest of any particular dish, as better than another. Nor, was he ever heard to speak in praise of any particular kind of food, that might be before him, or of which he had just partaken. He ever seemed to feel that the bounties of Providence were better and more abundant than he deserved. He desired to partake of them in gratitude, and to devote the strength sustained by them to the faithful and diligent discharge of duty. He partook of animal food, simply cooked, in moderate quantities. He was never particular to have animal food for breakfast; and yet, if placed before him, he did not pass it by, but ate with a good relish. At dinner it was his custom to have animal food, and yet, if the table was spread with hasty pudding and milk, he could make his dinner. He usually salted down in the fall his barrel of beef, and another of pork, which were consumed during the winter. At other seasons, he would kill a lamb or a chicken, and have them boiled, and broth made of the liquid in which they were cooked. But in all cases, his food was simply cooked, without those heating spices and health destroying condiments now so common. If there was any one article of food of which he ever

seemed more fond than of another, it was milk. He often made his meal of this, either in its natural state, or boiled or made into milk porridge. There was a period of his life, between the ages of ninety-five and one hundred, when he almost entirely gave up animal food and confined himself to a milk diet. But he thought that he experienced a clogging effect from his milk, and he returned to the common diet of the family, eating animal food in moderate quantities.

In regard to his drinks, he never abjured tea and coffee. It is true, that, from his straitened circumstances, coffee was very seldom placed upon his table. The beverage, which passed under the name of coffee, was prepared from rye, or the crusts of bread burned and pounded fine and prepared in all other respects as coffee is usually prepared. On some special occasions, when strangers were present, or perhaps on the morning of the Annual Thanksgiving, a cup of coffee properly so called was allowed. But even then, it was made somewhat weak, and well supplied with cream and sugar, so that it was little else than cream and sugar, warmed and colored with a slight infusion of coffee. He always drank weak black tea at night. At other times, he drank water, molasses and water, burnt crust and water, or small beer, but always in moderate quantities. These were his common articles of drink. He did occasionally drink a tumbler of cider, but he was never in the habit of drinking it regularly, as was then the custom of most of his

neighbors. He was fearful that cider drinking might end in drunkenness. He thought that the children of some of his neighbors, who had extensive orchards and made large quantities of cider, were laying the foundation of habits, which would prove their ruin. This operated on his mind to such a degree, that it was one of the strongest reasons why he did not set out a large orchard himself. He was fond of apples and regarded them as wholesome fruit, but he feared the free use of cider. He did sometimes provide a small quantity in the fall. And on very cold days, or when he had been in the woods, he would drink a little. But cider was never a common drink either with himself or family.

Wine he never kept in the house, except what, as an officer in the church, he provided for sacramental occasions. And he was never in the habit of either offering or taking himself, a glass of wine, even on special occasions. If it was ordered by the physician, as a medicine in sickness, it was obtained and used as any other medicine would have been. But the family never knew what it was to drink wine as a matter of pleasure, or as an indulgence of luxury. The writer does not remember ever taking a glass of wine under his father's roof, or seeing any one else do it.

In regard to ardent spirits, Deacon Whitman had strong feelings of apprehension, that even the moderate use of them, was in all cases dangerous. He never regarded them as an appropriate drink for man. There were extreme cases, and some particu-

lar seasons and labors, in which he thought they might be used. He did indeed generally keep ardent spirits in the house, but it was principally as a medicine. They were never spoken of by him, or regarded by the family, as an article of drink. If any of the family had been exposed to wet or cold, a small portion was administered. But the children no more thought of going to the bottle of spirits, for a drink, than they would of going to the bottle of castor oil for the same purpose. Deacon Whitman did also use ardent spirits very sparingly during the season of haying. But, so sparing was he in the use of it, compared with his neighbors, that it was said by way of joke, among the young men of the neighborhood, that "Deacon Whitman could get through his haying with a single quart of rum, as he never drank, but only smelled of it." Such were his feelings and practices in regard to the use of intoxicating liquors, at a time when all around him were using them freely as a daily drink. He was far in advance of his times, upon this subject, though he had not quite reached the high ground of modern abstinence. But his very dread of the article, his jealousy of the tendency and final result of the habit of using it, prepared him to hail with joy the Temperance Reform. The new light which was thrown upon the subject, the principle of entire adstinence which was adopted, were gladly received by him as the long wished-for consummation of the hopes, desires, and anxieties he had cherished. A single anecdote may illustrate the almost youthful ar-

dor that was awakened in the heart of the good old man, by his zeal in this glorious cause. He had reached and passed his hundredth year — had ceased to take an active part in voting and other similar duties of citizenship. But he was told that, in the town where he resided, the election of town officers was to turn upon the question of temperance and anti-temperance. This aroused the old man's energy; he determined that he would vote. He had his vote for the temperance list of candidates printed by a daughter in large letters, which he could himself read, so that he might make no mistake, and went forth to the town meeting. The question was tested in the choice of a moderator, and the temperance candidate was elected by a single vote. So that the credit of carrying the day was given to Deacon Whitman. This was after he was an hundred years old, and it is believed was the last time that he took an interest in the elections. Most worthy of his character, and most consistent with his whole past life, was this last duty of citizenship.

Deacon Whitman was never in the habit of using tobacco. His father was a great smoker. He began to smoke when four years old, in order to prevent his drinking. He almost made it the business of his life to smoke. When he went into the woods, for a load of wood, he would strike fire, light his pipe, and smoke a few whiffs, before proceeding to his labor. And when, within a few weeks of eighty-eight years of age, he was upon the bed of death, he asked a grandchild to hand him his pipe, that he might smoke

a whiff or two. But before the lad had lighted the pipe, the old man had yielded up the breath of life. Deacon Whitman was therefore trained up in the midst of tobacco smoke. And when a boy, he was fond of lighting the pipe for his father, that, in doing it, he might take a whiff or two himself. But after his boyhood, he was never in the habit of using tobacco, in any way, either by chewing, or smoking, or in the form of snuff. He had, however, the idea that, in the sick room, smoking might be a preventive against contagion. On one occasion, therefore, when a daughter was sick with a typhus fever, the writer recollects to have seen his father smoke a few whiffs, before entering, and a few more after leaving the sick room. This was the extent of his use of tobacco. And in this he was somewhat remarkable, especially when we take into view the facts, that he was trained in the midst of tobacco smoke, and in early life was quite fond of it.

CHAPTER III.

HIS RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

A SOMEWHAT detailed account of Deacon Whitman's mode of living has been given. His religious opinions and character next demand attention. In regard to his religious opinions, there seems to have been a desire on the part of some, during the latter years of his life, to rank him with the modern and exclusive orthodox. This attempt does great injustice to his character, and no one would have sooner repelled the imputation than Deacon Whitman himself, were he living. In truth, and justice to his memory, he ought not to be classed with any of the predominant schools in theology, either of his own time, or of the present. He was, in his very temperament, averse to all extremes. He was always unwilling to wear any sectarian badge, or to be called by any party name, in religion. He sought, in the true spirit of Protestantism, to make the Bible his guide in matters of faith and practice, and he wished to be ever regarded simply as a Bible Christian. There were many things, both in his opinions and in

his conduct, which might be adduced as arguments, to show that he might with propriety be classed with the Arminians of his day; and yet he would have been unwilling to have borne that name, and to have been regarded as adhering, in all things, to Arminian doctrines. And then there were some things, in his opinions and character, which would seem to authorize his being classed with the Calvinists. And yet, to the general spirit of Calvinism and to some of its doctrines, no man was more averse than Deacon Whitman. He believed in the doctrine of the Trinity, and yet he would have objected to the various and differing explanations of that doctrine, usually given by its advocates. He once said to the writer, that "he thought the three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were classed together and spoken of in connection, in the Scriptures, in such a manner as to authorize us to class them together and speak of them in connection. This, it is presumed, is as far as he would go in explanation, lest in so doing he should depart from the written word. He would not, it is thought, assert, either that these three were equal, or that they were the same. These things he regarded as among those secrets, which are not revealed, and which belong only to God. He had great reverence for the Bible; from the written word he sought to form his opinions. But he was willing that others should do the same. The three prominent traits in this aspect of his religious character were, devotion to the word of God, independence in the formation of

his own opinions, and charity towards the differing opinions of others.

These general remarks may be confirmed by adducing the particulars of Deacon Whitman's religious history. He received, as has been already stated, a religious education. When he went from home, as an apprentice, it was to be an inmate in the family of Deacon Jonathan Carey, of North Bridgewater. Deacon Carey was a relative of his mother, and the Carey family, with which he was thus connected, and by whom it might be supposed that he would be influenced, were Calvinists. At North Bridgewater, he sat under the preaching of good old Mr. Porter, who was an ardent follower of Calvin. During the time of his apprenticeship, Whitfield visited North Bridgewater, and Mr. Porter became a great admirer of this truly eloquent but somewhat excentric man. Deacon Whitman was one of Whitfield's hearers, and was seriously impressed by his preaching. Soon after he was twenty-one, he went to the Jerseys and lived in the family of Capt. Ebenezer Bryam. Mr. Bryam had removed from East Bridgewater to the Jerseys, and it was well known that he removed on account of having become a warm friend of the Whitfield excitement, which old Mr. Angier, the pastor in East Bridgewater, zealously opposed. Here then, at his first starting in life, Deacon Whitman was called to decide between Calvinism and the Whitfield excitement on the one hand, and liberality and good order on the other. But, notwithstanding all the early influences to which he was subjected were

in favor of Calvinism and Whitfieldian excitement, yet Deacon Whitman came back from the Jerseys and sat down quietly, and yielded his influence and support to the Angiers, and was always a fast friend to them, as his ministers. In the words of a friend, from whom a letter upon this subject has been received, we may say, "If his mother's milk; if all his early associations; if all early training and public instruction, if all the zeal manifested in the Whitfield controversy, which he had heard, read, and well understood, all of which were mainly, if not wholly Calvinistic; if all these influences would not, as it seems they did not, lead him to adopt the orthodox creed, but, on the contrary, left him a steady and uniform adherent to the teachings and ministry of the Angiers, who were most decidedly Arminian, how can there be any doubt as to the liberality of his views." Thus we see him, at the commencement of life, rising above all early influences, and deciding against the rigid and exclusive, and in favor of the more liberal and charitable views of that day.

In 1764, soon after his first marriage, he and his wife united themselves to the church of Christ, in East Bridgewater, under the pastoral care of Rev. Mr. Angier. There appears among his papers a confession of faith, in two forms. The second seems to be but a copy of the first, somewhat abridged and rendered more scriptural. The second of these forms is as follows:

"I desire to bless God that it was my lot to be born in a land of gospel light and liberty, and of re-

ligious parents; that I was early given up to God in baptism; that I was early instructed in the ways of religion, and taught to fear God from my youth. I desire to be thankful for the divine restraints, and the strivings of God's Holy Spirit with me. I desire to blush and be ashamed that I have made no better improvement of the same. I have been made sensible of the lost condition I am in by nature, and of my utter inability to help myself out of that state. And I hope I have been enabled to receive it, as a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,' (as in Timothy i. 15.) I have received comfort and encouragement from many places of scripture, as in Psalm lv. 22, 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee,' and Psalm ix. 9 and 10 verses, 'The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee.'

"I have had a desire to offer myself to the communion of this church, for some time, but have been afraid, lest I should come unworthily. But I am resolved, depending alone on the grace of Christ for assistance, and the merits of Christ for acceptance, to spend the remainder of my days, as much as possible, in obedience to his commands. And since this is one of his last commands, as in 1st Corinthians xi. 24, I would humbly obey his words, 'this do in remembrance of me.'

"Thus, I desire to offer myself to your holy commu-

nion, begging your charitable acceptance of me and prayers to God for me, that I may be a welcome guest at the Lord's table, 'having on the wedding garment.'"

This confession of faith, it will be seen, has in it nothing of a doctrinal or sectarian character. It is an expression of pious and devout feelings. There are, what may seem to some, allusions to the doctrines of total depravity and a vicarious atonement. And yet, judging from Deacon Whitman's known character and opinions, it is presumed that he would have been unwilling to have exchanged the expressions used, for the commonly received orthodox explanations of them. They were a part of the current religious language of the day. He employed them, no doubt, without thought of their controversial aspect, and only to express his deep sense of his own unworthiness, and his humble reliance upon Christ for salvation. But it is somewhat remarkable that these two expressions are all that can possibly bear a doctrinal construction, that there is not even an allusion, the most slight, to the doctrines of the trinity, of election, and of saints perseverance. Indeed, the whole appearance of this confession of faith is that of a sincere and honest declaration of pious, and devout feelings. It is very uncertain, to say the least, whether one could be admitted to our modern exclusive churches upon a confession of faith no more full than this. In regard to this confession, Deacon Whitman in 1830, writes thus, "As to the profession of faith which I made in early life, I have not seen reason to

alter it. I rest my whole hope of salvation upon our Lord Jesus Christ, *as he is offered to sinners in the gospel of his grace, whom I hope and desire to obey in all things*, and I pray that I may be prepared for his coming."

During the lives of the Angiers, father and son, who were successively his pastors, Deacon Whitman adhered firmly to their views. With them, he was opposed to extravagant religious excitements, and to all the peculiarities of the New Lights or revivalists of that day. In all ecclesiastical councils, he was with them upon the liberal side. It was customary, at that time, for those who made a public profession of religion to give a written relation of experiences and confession of faith. Deacon Whitman was the first to advise a departure from this practice. His daughter, Bathsheba, was about to make a profession of religion. She was advised by her father to omit the written relation. And this advice was voluntarily given, as the result of his own reflection, and not because the daughter felt at all unwilling to comply with the long-established custom. For this he was blamed, at the time, by the other deacon of the church.

After the second Mr. Angier was dismissed, the religious society and Christian church in East Bridgewater, of which Deacon Whitman was a member, were for a long time divided in feeling and opinion. A large number of candidates were employed, and finally they could unite upon no one. Rev. James Flint, now Dr. Flint of Salem, was invited by the

majority, to settle with them. He was known to be Anti-Trinitarian and Anti-Calvinistic in sentiments. A bitter opposition was made to his settlement on that account. And finally, the other deacon of the church, with a respectable minority of both church and society, seceded, and, in connection with some from the adjoining town of Abington, formed a new society. Had Deacon Whitman's feelings led him strongly to the orthodox and exclusive of the day, here was an occasion, on which he must, it would seem, have manifested his preferences. But he took the lead in the settlement of Mr. Flint, and this too, not only in face of the opposition of the more rigid and exclusive with whom he had been accustomed to walk, but even in the midst of the reproaches, which they cast upon him for the course he pursued. On one occasion, one of the number opposed to the settlement of Mr. Flint, said to him, in the hearing of the Rev. N. Whitman, now of Calais, "How can you, Deacon Whitman, being yourself a Trinitarian, assist in settling Mr. Flint, who, it is known, is not a Trinitarian." Deacon Whitman answered, "I have never called myself a Trinitarian, I have never liked any of your sectarian names; if I must take a name, I should prefer to be called a Bible Christian. Mr. Flint's preaching seems to me to be scriptural, and therefore I am willing to take part in settling him."

The following letter from Dr. Flint, of Salem, will show the character of his intercourse with Deacon Whitman during the several years of his ministry in East Bridgewater.

DEAR SIR,—My recollections of your late honored and venerated father are as fresh and vivid in my mind while I write, as during the interval from my first acquaintance with him to the close of my ministry in East Bridgewater, throughout the whole of which, we were wont to "take sweet counsel together and walk to the house of God in company." Residing in his family while preaching as a candidate, and ever after during my ministry a frequent visitor at his house, my intercourse with him was almost as a son with a father. Our communications upon the subject, which was uppermost in our minds, the religion which we, each in our appointed sphere, were most solicitous to recommend, were always perfectly frank and unreserved. His whole deportment and conversation appeared to me remarkable for their unaffected plainness, kindness, candor, cheerfulness, "simplicity and godly sincerity." As he presided in his family, he seemed to me to resemble in character, the Hebrew Patriarch, of whom it was said by the God of Israel, "I know that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." He seemed to me to be ever influenced by a deep, reverential, heartfelt piety, walking humbly with God, living as seeing him who is invisible, soberly, righteously and piously in the daily tenor and employments of his exemplary life, always in the exercise of an enlarged and kindly charity towards all Christians, whose life appeared to be "as becometh the gospel of Christ." It was well known that I was anti-Trinitarian, and anti-Calvinistic in my views of

Christian doctrine, when I was invited to accept the office of pastor and teacher to the society and church, of which your father had been for many years, and continued to be after my settlement an officiating deacon. Fully aware of this fact, and that this was the ground of opposition to my settlement assigned by a minority of parishioners and church members, who finally seceded, after my ordination, your father was nevertheless an unwavering advocate of my settlement, and continued a constant attendant upon my ministry, until the dissolution of my connection with the parish. I can confidently affirm, that, in all my intercourse with your father, I never heard from him an expression, or saw in him an action, that indicated either sympathy with the feelings, or approbation of the measures of the exclusionists, or those who refused to exchange pulpits with me and others, who were then called liberal Christians. On the contrary, I have heard him, time and again, condemn their course of secession and exclusion, as uncharitable and unauthorized by the spirit or letter of the gospel. He often said to me, that he considered difference of opinion respecting the Trinity no just cause for separation, or interruption of Christian affection, or of joint worship and communion in the same congregation and church. During thirteen years of official and friendly intercourse with your father, he ever expressed himself satisfied with my public services, and those of the liberal brethren with whom I was in the habit of exchanging. He ever appeared to me, alike exemplary in Christian deportment, catho-

lic in his feelings towards Christians of different names and creeds, sincere and strong in faith, hope and charity. And I might myself be claimed with as good reason as your father, as belonging to the party of exclusionists. Respectfully yours,

JAMES FLINT.

About the time of Mr. Flint's leaving East Bridgewater, there began to be a more distinct avowal of the peculiarities of Unitarianism, so called, among the liberal clergymen, than they had before felt themselves authorized to make. This seemed to Deacon Whitman to be a wide departure from the views which he had ever held, and he was somewhat disturbed in his feelings at the apparent change. But although his feelings were disturbed, he held fast his kind-hearted charity towards those who made the avowal. Nor did he, at this time of disturbed feelings, resort to the leaders of the orthodox and exclusive ranks for advice. When he wished for counsel, he visited Dr. John Reed, of West Bridgewater, who was one of the firmest supporters of liberal principles.

After Mr. Flint left East Bridgewater, Rev. Benjamin Fessenden was settled as pastor over the church and society, which had thus been left vacant. Deacon Whitman regarded himself as now too far advanced in years to take an active part in this transaction. Still, in a letter to his son Nathaniel, written about this time, he speaks with interest of the measures taken to settle Mr. Fessenden, as the transac-

tions of "our parish." This is but a slight indication of his feelings at this time. But, as a new society was about this time formed by the union of some seceders from the old parish with some of Calvinistic sentiments from West Bridgewater, even this slight indication shows pretty distinctly where he felt himself at home. The son, with whom he resided, was an active member of this new union society. But Deacon Whitman himself always remained firm in his adherence to the old parish. Indeed, he remained true to this parish as long as he lived. He did, indeed, for convenience sake, often attend with his son at the new meeting. But he did not transfer his church relationship, nor ever regard or speak of himself as a member of that society. There seemed to be a desire, on the part of some, that he should come out and take an open stand on orthodox or exclusive ground. And some, who could find no other fault with his character, felt somewhat aggrieved that he did not do this. This state of feeling caused that an occurrence, which took place while Mr. J. A. Williams was the pastor, should be much noticed, as indicating an open withdrawal from the Church, with which he had been for so many years connected. Deacon Whitman was at meeting, seated, as usual, in the deacon's seat, so called, in front of the pulpit. Just before Mr. Williams descended from the pulpit, for the purpose of administering the communion, Deacon Whitman took his hat and retired. Such was the occurrence. The appearance to all present was, of course, that he de-

clined communing with that Church. Deacon Whitman was aware that such must be the impression. He was particular, therefore, so to explain the cause of his withdrawal to Mr. Williams, in the hearing of the writer, as to remove such impression from his mind. And so anxious was Deacon Whitman that a right understanding of this occurrence should be left behind when he should be called away, that on the very day after it took place, he wrote the following account of it. "I, John Whitman, having obtained help of God, am continued among the living, and was so well yesterday as to attend meeting with raised hopes of attending in an humble and acceptable manner, probably for the last time, the celebration of the dying love of our dear Saviour, at his table. Mr. Williams, after he closed his sermon, called the attention of his hearers to another subject, which I could not hear, so as to understand. Although I heard something about thirty dollars for a member for life, and one dollar a year for others. As I could not understand, through weakness and decay, I was so perplexed and disconcerted, that I thought it best to withdraw, *not out of any uncharitableness towards pastor or brethren.* I would also here say, that according to my best judgment, after reading upon both sides of the question, in the present dispute between the Trinitarians and Unitarians, the Trinitarians' view appears to me to be the most agreeable to the Bible, as it now stands. I desire to be master of no man's faith, only to enjoy my own, hoping to be found in the way of holiness, without erring knowingly or wil-

lingly from duty." Such was Deacon Whitman's own account of the occurrence, to which allusion has been made, written, as it appears, the day after it took place. Perhaps a few words of explanation may be necessary. Deacon Whitman went to church, as it seems, in the exercise of full charity towards the pastor and the members of the church, whom he calls *brethren*. He went, more especially, in the exercise of grateful and devout feelings, to unite once more, with his brethren on earth, in the commemoration of the love of the Saviour. At the close of the sermon, when he was expecting only the usual invitation to members of other churches, Mr. Williams called the attention of the people to the formation of an association auxiliary to the American Unitarian Association, and stated the usual terms of membership. Deacon Whitman could not hear enough to get any clear idea of what Mr. Williams was proposing. As it was immediately before the communion was to be administered, he very naturally supposed that the remarks might have some relation to that ordinance, and he knew not but Mr. Williams might be proposing some change in regard to it. He was in doubt, filled with perplexity, and all unfitted to enter upon the observance of the supper, in such a frame of mind as would render the ordinance pleasant and profitable. He withdrew. He was aware of the strong party feelings which existed in the community, of the anxiety there was to have him do something which might authorize his being classed with the exclusionists. In order, therefore,

to guard against any such conclusion, and to give the true reasons for the course he had pursued, he makes a record, while the matter is fresh upon his mind, and says distinctly, that *he did not withdraw out of any uncharitable feelings towards either pastor or brethren.* Still, he wished it to be understood that he did not call himself a Unitarian. He therefore adds a statement of his impressions in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. And then, knowing that Trinitarians were exclusive in their feelings, and had denied to Unitarians all christian intercourse, and even the right to bear the christian name, he is careful to state still further, that he has no desire to dictate to others what they shall believe. This whole transaction, together with the record of it which Deacon Whitman himself has made, is in perfect consistency with his previous character, and shows his independence in the formation of his own opinions, in connection with his perfect charity towards those who differed from him. But he was not satisfied with merely explaining the cause of his withdrawal to Mr. Williams and others, and putting that explanation in writing. He sought an opportunity to commune again openly with that church. For several years he had attended meeting, when he went at all, at the Orthodox church, with his son, because it was more convenient, as he must ride. But on one occasion the writer spent the sabbath in East Bridgewater, and preached for Mr. Crafts, who had succeeded Mr. Williams. It was communion day. Deacon Whitman, knowing this, availed him-

self of the opportunity of attending there, and communing with that church. This was his object and purpose in attending, as he told the writer before he went, that he did not expect to hear a word of the discourse. He was desirous of showing, by deed as well as by word, that he was in full charity with the church, with which he originally united, and which, amid all the divisions of the day, he never saw reason to leave.

The most prominent points in Deacon Whitman's religious history have been given. And they all tend to show that he is not to be classed with any of the theological parties, and especially that he had no sympathy, from first to last, with anything like sectarian exclusiveness. It only remains to add a few desultory anecdotes illustrative of the same point.

In 1826 or 27, the Rev. Bernard Whitman, of Waltham, preached and published a sermon on "Denying the Lord." This discourse was one of the plainest and most direct arguments, against what had been termed Orthodox views of Christ, which had at that time appeared. The writer visited his father soon after the publication of this discourse. He put the sermon in his trunk. Fearing that it might disturb the old gentleman's feelings, he determined not to let him see the discourse, unless he should ask for it. But Deacon Whitman had read, in the Boston Recorder, and the Christian Register, notices of his son's discourse. He wished, therefore, to read it for himself. He asked for the sermon, and it was handed to him. He spent two or three days in read-

ing the discourse and comparing its statements with those writings which he had been accustomed to read. After having given the subject this careful examination, he remarked that Bernard had given a view of the subject very different from what he had ever held. But, he added, he has enjoyed a better opportunity for studying these subjects than I did. He may be right and I may be wrong. I have endeavored to form my opinions according to the best light I have enjoyed, and I have sought to make my opinions influential upon my conduct. I am now too old to investigate the whole subject anew, and remodel my opinions. It is a consolation to think that we are neither of us accountable for the opinions of the other, but are both required to improve aright the respective degrees of light, with which we are favored.

There was a public religious service on the day on which Deacon Whitman completed his hundredth year. The preacher, on the occasion, by some looseness of expression, gave the idea that Deacon Whitman dated his conversion from the preaching of Whitfield. Rev. Nathaniel Whitman was afterwards conversing with his father upon this subject, and asked him directly the question, "Did you date your conversion from the preaching of Whitfield?" Deacon Whitman answered with a good deal of energy, "Date my conversion from the preaching of Whitfield! No. I have never yet dated my conversion. I know of no other way of salvation than by a patient continuance in well doing even unto the end."

Miss Bathsheba Whitman was conversing with her father upon religious subjects during the latter part of his life. She asked him why it was, that he had never taken more pains in the doctrinal instruction of his children, to impress upon their minds the importance of embracing and adhering to the doctrines which he had himself embraced. He answered, that were he to live his life over again he should pursue the same course he had done. He wished his children to take the Bible as their guide, and to form their opinions for themselves, by the faithful study of its sacred pages.

At the time the writer was about commencing the study of his profession, he asked his father's advice, whether to go to the theological school at Cambridge or to that at Andover. Deacon Whitman advised him to go to Cambridge. The reason he gave for the advice was, that he thought the advantages must be greater there than at Andover. And, as for opinions, "I hope you do not intend to follow implicitly the opinions of your instructers, let you go to either of the schools. I hope you will study the Bible for yourself, and follow faithfully its instructions, as they unfold themselves to your mind."

It was the case with Deacon Whitman, as with most elderly people, that he felt a deeper interest in the style of preaching to which he had been accustomed for years, than in that adopted by the young men, who came upon the stage in his old age. But his preference was not based upon differences in doctrine. He read, repeatedly, and with great interest,

the occasional sermons of the Rev. Dr. Cummings, of Billerica, which had been sent him by his son, Nathaniel, who was settled as colleague with Dr. C. He always listened with pleasure to the Rev. Pitt Clarke, of Norton. Rev. Dr. Ripley, of Concord, and Rev. Dr. Pierce, of Brookline, were among those in whom he ever manifested a deep interest, and of whom he always spoke with great respect. Deacon Whitman's children were divided in opinion, some of them were decided Trinitarians, and others as decided Unitarians. The three sons, who were preachers, were open and decided Unitarians. And yet, Deacon Whitman never manifested the least difference of feeling towards them. He never remonstrated with those, who were Unitarian in sentiment, nor with those, who were Trinitarians. He seemed to rejoice when his children manifested an interest in the subject of religion, and was desirous that they should study the Bible for themselves. And while he saw in them a devotion to the written word, and the manifestation of practical godliness, he could take them cordially by the hand, could freely unite with them in prayer and communion, and bid them God speed in their course, even though they had embraced sentiments different from his own. He claimed the right of judging for himself, and without any forthputting pretences to independence of character, he ever, with unwavering firmness, exercised the right which he claimed. No one would sooner repel the attempt on the part of another to dictate what he should believe. No one would more promptly refuse

to be classed, even by implication, with any denomination where his views must be shaped by the limits of a creed, and he might be supposed to cherish unkind feelings towards others who should reject that creed. But, while he was independent in his own opinions, he was ever willing that others should enjoy the same independence. It is doubted whether he was ever heard to speak unkindly of any one on account of difference of opinion upon religious subjects. He has been heard to lament and rebuke the oppositecours e in others. There was manifested in his whole life, that gospel charity, which hopeth all things, a willingness to make all proper allowances, to believe that motives might be good, and to hope that good results might ensue, even where appearances were unfavorable. He ever manifested a strong aversion to all extravagant religious excitements. This resulted from his view of a religious life as consisting in uniform obedience, from his natural evenness of temperament, seldom much excited by passions or emotions; from the regularity of his general habits of living, and more especially from having witnessed, in early life, practices, in connection with such excitements, which he regarded as sinful. On this subject he expressed him elf decidedly. The following extract from a letter, written at the agè of ninety, to his son, Hosea, then residing in a place where he had understood religious excitements were prevailing, will manifest his feelings at that time: — "I would not have you try to raise your name by doing two days' work in one, but by work-

ing well and steadily. I hope you will remember the first day, and attend meeting as steadily as your health and the care of your family will admit, and work the other six. I should advise you not to go to night meetings, nor to week-day meetings frequently. I trust you will be as much in the way of your duty, and as much out of the way of temptation, while about your business, as at any other place." If there was any one point in his character, where strong prejudices seem to have been manifested, it was in relation to night meetings and religious excitements. On one occasion a meeting was held of a week evening in his son's part of the house in which he lived. Deacon Whitman attended and seemed to enjoy the exercises. It was thought that his feelings upon this subject were changing, and that he would take an active interest in such meetings. In the course of a few days a similar meeting was held at one of the neighbors. He was asked, when the time of the meeting arrived, if he would attend. He answered, that if the gentleman had anything to say to the people, and would say it at a proper time and place, he should be glad to hear him; but that he should not encourage irregular proceedings. And yet, strong as his feelings and prejudices were against evening meetings, his natural good sense led him to make some exceptions. He thought that in cities, where there were many who could not attend meeting during the day, services in the evening might be beneficial.

It is hoped that a fair view has now been given of

Deacon Whitman's views and feelings upon the subject of religious opinions. He dwelt so little himself upon speculative opinions, that it has been somewhat difficult to present, at a single glance, a correct representation of them. For, whatever might have been the peculiar shades of his own opinions upon religious doctrines, they were never brought forward by him as matters of prominence and importance. They were not the subjects of his inquiries in regard to strangers, nor of his daily conversations before his children. They were not dwelt upon and inculcated, as the essentials of religion, without which one could not be regarded as a christian, or a pious man, and consequently it is more difficult to describe precisely what his peculiarities of belief were. But, with Deacon Whitman, principles and character were ever regarded as of much more importance than opinions. And it is presumed that enough has been said to show that his principles were those of devotion to the word of God, and the right of private judgment in matters of religion, independence in the formation of his own opinions, and enlarged charity towards those who might differ from him. If Deacon Whitman is claimed by any sect or party in religion, as belonging to their number, it is hoped they will take him as he was, with his whole character. Do the exclusionists claim him? Let them boast, if they please, that in some respects he agreed with them in opinion; but let their exclusiveness and uncharitable judgment of those who differ from them, be rebuked by the enlarged liberality and expansive

charity, by which his life and character were so strongly marked. Do the liberals claim him? — Let them boast of his liberality and charity towards those who differed from him, if they please; but let them copy his unreserved devotion to the word of God, his simplicity and godly sincerity, and his persevering endeavor to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, in a pure and blameless manner. Is he called orthodox? God grant that the world may be filled with just such orthodox men as Deacon Whitman was, whose orthodoxy and charity united shall blend in one harmonious manifestation of perfect symmetry in the christian character. Is he called liberal? God grant that the world may be filled with just such liberal men as he was, whose liberality in his judgment of others was equalled by his scrupulous regard to truth and duty in his own character.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AND GENERAL DEPORTMENT.

We have seen what Deacon Whitman was, in regard to religious opinions, parties and sects. He was one who sought to follow the Bible, unbiased by a regard for others, but in the exercise of perfect charity towards all who loved the Lord Jesus, whatever speculative opinions they might embrace, by whatever sectarian name they might be called. But it would be the height of injustice to the symmetry and completeness of his christian character, to leave it with simply the view, that has been given, of his religious opinions. For, with him, opinions always held a secondary place, and were regarded but as instruments in the formation of the christian character. He did not consider a man a christian, simply because he had embraced this or that opinion. He looked upon *him* only as the true christian, who sought sincerely and earnestly to obey Christ. As such were his general views in regard to the importance of character, we shall naturally desire to know something of his own, in what manner and propor-

tions it was developed, and by what peculiarities it was marked.

Individual Conscience. — The first striking trait in Deacon Whitman's christian character was reverence for individual conscience. By this, it is meant that he felt it to be the solemn duty of every one, as an individual before God, to embrace and hold those opinions which he might honestly believe to be true, and to engage in those practices and pursue those courses which he might honestly believe to be right, simply because they approved themselves to his mind, as true and right. Deacon Whitman believed that God deals with men, not in masses, or associated bodies, but as individuals; that the enlightening, guiding, sanctifying influences of God's Holy Spirit are given, not to particular churches or sects, to be dispensed by them, but that they are poured into individual souls, shed abroad upon individual hearts; and that the word of God is addressed, not to parties and denominations, not to councils and assemblies, to be dealt out by them to those who might desire or seek instruction, but that it was given to individuals, to enlighten their minds, improve their hearts, and control their characters, as individuals. He wished that no man, or body of men, might stand between him and his God — between him and his Saviour.

In the formation of his religious opinions, Deacon Whitman wished to go to the Bible, as an individual, under a solemn sense of his responsibility to his own conscience and his God. He asked not what this denomination or that believed. He sought to under-

stand the Bible, and endeavored to embrace, with a hearty faith, whatever he found taught there. And yet, in all this, he was not self-conceited, nor arrogant, as to his own opinions. He gladly availed himself of all the assistance within his reach. But he employed the writings and opinions of others, not as guides to be implicitly followed, but as helps, affording increased information, and the materials, which, by reflection, were to be worked into his own settled convictions. When about to adopt an opinion, his inquiry was, not whether it accorded with the opinions of this or of that denomination, but whether it corresponded with the plain teachings of the Bible. He was willing to unite with christians of all denominations in any measures calculated to promote the good of the community, as long as they would have their own faith, in its distinguishing peculiarities, to themselves before God, and would manifest respect for the faith of others. But when one undertook to dictate to him as to his opinions, or to speak in tones of bitter denunciation of the opinions of others, he was firm in the expression of his own individual independence, and of his feelings of charity towards those who differed from him, and decided in his rebukes of the spirit of denunciation.

As it was with his religious opinions, so it was with his views of duty. He asked, not what the fashions of society would tolerate, what the maxims of the world would authorize; he sought to know what the Gospel, in its plain precepts, in its true spirit, required. He took the Bible and read it as a commu-

nication addressed by God to him, as an individual, and sought to know what God wished him, in his situation, to do, what spirit and principles he should cherish, what course of conduct he should pursue. Having, in this way, come to a decision in regard to duty, his principles were fixed, and were based upon some substantial foundation. Society around him might all be pursuing courses diametrically opposite to those which he pursued. It did not disturb him, for his principles were based, not upon the fashions and practices of the community, but upon the requirements of God's word. Having formed his opinions and established his principles in this way, he had rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY. — In Deacon Whitman's extreme reverence for individual conscience was the foundation for his enlarged charity towards all who differed from him — for he reverenced the consciences of others, as well as his own. He would not lift a finger to impose his own religious opinions upon any other individual, and he always put the most favorable construction upon the conduct of those who differed from him in regard to his practices. He even conscientiously avoided instilling his own peculiar religious opinions into the minds of his children. He sought to train them up in habits of virtue, to impress upon them a deep sense of their accountableness to God, and to lead them to the Bible as the guide of their faith and practice. But he wished them to go, as he had gone, to the Bible, as individuals, feeling their responsibleness to their consciences

and their God. He would have them carry with them the fear, not of departing from the opinions of a fallible earthly parent, but of mistaking or misunderstanding the instructions of God's word. And, in this charity, there was a perfect consistency. He did not commend his children to the Bible, directing them to study it for themselves, and then manifest uncharitable feelings towards them, because, in their study of it, they did not arrive at the same conclusions at which he had arrived. Some of his children embraced doctrines different from his own. His feelings towards them were as cordial as they were towards those who more nearly agreed with him in opinion. Nor was this enlarged and consistent charity confined to his children. He cherished the same towards all men of all denominations. He would never speak unkindly or in terms of ridicule of any denomination. He always inculcated upon his children the importance of ever treating with respect the serious and honest religious convictions of others, how strange soever they might appear. If he saw men turning from sin and pursuing holiness, he rejoiced and gave God thanks, with whatever denomination they might connect themselves, and how much soever they might differ from him in their speculative opinions. And, in regard to all practices, which did not involve sin nor endanger the best interests of the community, he ever put the most charitable construction upon all unfavorable appearances, and cherished the hope that motives might be good, and that good results would follow, even when he could not approve

the courses of conduct pursued. Thus were there blended in the character of Deacon Whitman, in sweet and harmonious union, the two seemingly opposite qualities, of a rigid adherence to his own opinions and principles, united with an enlarged and consistent charity towards those who might differ from him.

Universal Conscientiousness. — In close connection with the traits already noticed was that of universal conscientiousness. By this is meant an application of religious principle and of conscience to the whole conduct of life, to the more trifling, as well as to the more important circumstances, actions and pursuits of life. Every one who knew Deacon Whitman, felt that he would sooner cut off a right hand than do what he thought to be wrong. He was never a man of policy, manœuvring and expediency. He was straight-forward and honest, in his devotion to truth, right and duty. You always knew where to find him, and how to meet him. If he expressed an opinion, or entered upon a course of conduct, every one felt that he did so, because he believed the one to be true and the other to be duty. And if you differed from him, you knew how to approach him. You must seek to convince him that he was wrong, not that his holding those opinions or pursuing those courses would be bad policy. And you might do this with a firm belief, that, if you could convince him that he was wrong, either in opinion or practice, he would not hesitate for a moment to change. He did not make a distinction between business and re-

ligion, regarding business as one thing and religion as entirely separate. His religion was based upon a strong and living faith, accompanied by deep and holy emotions, and manifested in a conscientious regard for duty in all the details of every day life. This conscientiousness, based upon christian faith, and animated by the spirit of christian love, was the manifestation of the spirit of christian obedience. Deacon Whitman believed in God, as the rewarder of all who might diligently seek him. He believed also in Christ as the sanctified and sent of the Father, and in his instructions, as the authorized disclosures of God's will. If, in any particular case, his own reason, his present view of the probable consequences of his conduct, seemed to prompt to a course different from that required in the Gospel, he did not hesitate to follow the Gospel requisitions, to walk by faith rather than by sight. For he had more confidence in the instructions of Christ, as the Father's revealed will, than he had in any conclusions of his own reason. Then, too, his conscientiousness was animated by a spirit of love. The more he dwelt upon the character of God, the more was he filled with love to God. And the stronger his love, the more earnest was his desire to obey the precepts of the gospel.

Trust in the Providence of God. — We have spoken of Deacon Whitman's principles of action, and of the influence they exerted upon his conduct. But his religion was not only the governing influence of his character, it was the source of much happiness

even in this life. One of the most striking exhibitions of his religious character consisted in his unwavering trust in the wisdom and goodness of God's overruling Providence. He believed that God was perfect in wisdom and in love, that he was a father to the whole family of man, that he himself and all his were ever at the disposal of all-perfect wisdom and unlimited love, that all the blessings he enjoyed were the gifts of God's goodness, and that all the afflictive and sorrowful circumstances of life were perhaps a still stronger proof of his heavenly father's love. This child-like confidence, this unfailing trust in the goodness and wisdom of God's providence, was a marked and pervading trait in his character, and constituted the prolific source of much spiritual happiness. In prosperity, his heart naturally turned to God in thanksgiving and praise. When deprived of the blessings of life, he still turned to God in trust, yea, even in gratitude — for, in seasons of the greatest deprivation, he was often heard to say that he was still receiving at the hands of God far better treatment than he deserved. His gratitude was manifested in the cheerfulness and contentment with which he ever enjoyed the smallest of God's mercies. There were times when he found it difficult to procure more than the bare necessaries of life for his large family of children. But not a murmur escaped his lips; he still felt that his blessings far outweighed his deserts, he still praised God for his goodness. When one of the children spoke, in terms of strong regret, of some very respectable neighbors

who were so reduced as to be compelled to go to the alms-house, he at once rebuked her for the remarks she had made, and said that we ought, all of us, to look upon such establishments and provisions for the poor with feelings of gratitude to God,—and that we ought to be willing to go cheerfully to the alms-house, if, in the providence of God, we should be reduced to that necessity,— that we ought to feel truly grateful to the father of mercies, that he had put it into the hearts of the people to make such provision for the indigent.

His gratitude and trust were manifested, not merely in words, nor yet in their own appropriate characteristics only, but, also, in his general character of determined cheerfulness, contentment and patience. Amid all the changes of his long life, he was ever cheerful, contented with his lot, and patient in trial, sorrow and affliction. These traits of character were not the mere manifestations of a naturally amiable temperament. They were the result of principle, of effort, of self-control. They were based upon an unwavering trust in God's wisdom, and deep, heartfelt gratitude for God's goodness. He felt that the changes of his life, the circumstances in which he was placed, and the trials and sorrows through which he was called to pass, were ordered or permitted in infinite wisdom and all-perfect love,—that they were all intended, if rightly improved, to promote his highest and best good, his spiritual and eternal well-being. Having his heart supremely fixed upon spiritual improvement, rather than upon any present en-

joyment, he felt it to be the part of wisdom and of duty to maintain cheerfulness, contentment and patience. These traits, then, were moral qualities, the result of prayer and efforts in religious self-training, ever maintained under a sense of duty, and in a spirit of obedience to the will of God and the requirements of the gospel.

One trait of character more must be named. Deacon Whitman was a truly humble man. His humility was not of that doubtful kind which is manifested by his own declaration, of his humble sense of his own worthiness. He seldom spoke of himself, or of his attainments. He seemed to be unwilling to be the object of notice to others. He ever took the lower seat, conversed rather as an inquirer than as a dogmatist, and seemed to esteem others better than himself. But his humility had but little reference to the comparative attainments of others, it looked rather to God. And even here, he was not in the habit, as some are, of speaking in terms of severity in regard to his own character, or of trumpeting forth his own vileness by nature. He ever manifested a proper self-respect, and while he felt his own unworthiness in the sight of God, he exhibited that feeling in his general deportment, rather than by any particular acts or words; especially did he manifest his humility in his strong feeling of gratitude, that one so little deserving should be the recipient of such bounties, the object of so much love.

The christian character of Deacon Whitman, it will be perceived, was marked by reverence for in-

dividual conscience, in connection with great liberality of feeling in regard to those who might differ from him, by a spirit of universal conscientiousness, of unwavering confidence and trust in the wisdom and goodness of God's overruling providence, by a spirit of deep humility and of heartfelt gratitude to God, manifested in cheerfulness, contentment and patience. There was, therefore, in his personal religious character, great symmetry in the proportions, and great completeness in the parts. It is seldom that one is found exhibiting so uniformly all the features of a well-balanced christian character.

In Deacon Whitman's family government there was much of firmness and decision, but nothing of severity. The influence exerted upon the children was that of example, rather than of precept,— that of regular training, rather than that of occasional excitement. There was addressed to the children but very little direct and solemn exhortation upon the subject of religion. But there was continually before them the living representation of the beauty and happiness of the religious life. Instruction was conveyed, right feelings cherished, and proper principles implanted, by means of anecdotes and incidental conversations. In this way, ideas like the following were continually thrown out: — That we should ever be on our guard against the inventions of men in matters of religion,— that we should ever be contented with the allotments of Providence,— that every one should feel it to be a duty, and should regard it as a privilege, to attend public worship on the sabbath,

when not necessarily detained,— that, if possible, they should attend upon the preaching of one of their own sentiments, but if not, that still they should attend somewhere, for a well-disposed mind could derive profit from the preaching of any good man, to whatever denomination he might belong,— that the multiplication of religious services was often a device of the Devil, to drive out one good thing with another,— that expressions of peace and joy at the approach of death were gratifying to friends, but were no sure evidence of a heart right with God; that the evidence of this is to be sought in obedience of life,— that one should not adopt the religious opinions of another, because they are the opinions of that other, even though he might be a father or a religious teacher, but should adopt only such views as after careful examination might approve themselves to his own mind,— that one should never sneer at, or ridicule the religious opinions or observances of others,— that a person, unable to dispense with the daily use of ardent spirits, had already become enslaved, and was in great danger of being entirely ruined. These, and a vast variety of similar ideas, were the subjects, not of direct addresses, and earnest appeals, and protracted conversations, but of apparently casual remarks. An anecdote would be related, or an incidental observation made, or a maxim stated, not with the apparent purpose of instructing the children, but simply as called forth by the ever-varying circumstances of domestic life. In this way these ideas became familiar to the minds of the children, and char-

acterized the social and moral atmosphere which they were continually breathing. When any of the children were about to leave the paternal roof, or enter upon any new and important relation in life, there was no long, formal, common-place advice; there was only some short and simple, but pithy maxim or direction. The peculiarity of Deacon Whitman's family government consisted in this, that the parents endeavored to govern themselves, as well as their children. They exhibited to their children their deep regard for religion, not by continually talking to them upon the subject, but by quietly and perseveringly maintaining before them a truly christian spirit and deportment, by leading in their presence truly religious lives.

In society, Deacon Whitman was ever a modest and unassuming man, more anxious to do right himself, than to set his neighbors right. He was never ambitious of promotion; but if he was chosen to any trust, he was firm and decided and conscientious in the discharge of what he believed to be its duties. Here, as everywhere else, he abjured all tortuous policy, and went straight forward, without fear or favor. By this course he sometimes excited opposition, and failed to give universal satisfaction. Indeed, he never expected to give universal satisfaction, and therefore he aimed, principally, to satisfy his own conscience. He had no great reverence for the popular will, as the guide of conduct. He sought ever to obey the will of God, and he had never learned to regard the voice of the people, as the true

echo of the voice of God. He often quoted, with expressions of approbation, the remark of a friend of his early years, "That no man was fit for office, who could not bear to be kicked out of office." But, while Deacon Whitman sought to pursue the even tenor of his way in society, there was one thing, in regard to which he felt himself in duty called upon to remonstrate with his neighbors. He was, as has been previously stated, an ardent friend of temperance, long before the temperance reform, technically so called, had been thought of. As he dwelt upon the evils of intemperance, and sought to trace them to their source, he felt that the traffic in ardent spirits was the prolific source of evils too great to be fully estimated or described. Upon this point, his views were so decided, and his feelings were so strong, that he seldom, if ever, permitted a friend to open a retail store, without earnestly and affectionately remonstrating with him in regard to the traffic in ardent spirits. And this he was prompted to do, from his love of his fellow men, from his love of good order, comfort, and happiness in society, from his love even of those with whom he remonstrated. He thought he had seen a curse visiting, in some shape or other, the families of those who trafficked in this article. He used to speak of a friend of his in a neighboring town, who opened a retail store, and with whom he remonstrated upon the subject. He was answered, that it was necessary to have ardent spirits as a bait to draw people to his store. But the result was, that the bait allured both the man and his

wife into the destructive snares of intemperance. Sometimes his naturally calm temperament became warmed and excited upon this subject. On one occasion he remonstrated with a friend of his against selling to a neighbor, who was evidently drinking to excess, and bringing poverty and wretchedness upon his family. The retailer answered, that he could not have the heart to refuse an old neighbor, when he wished for a drink. Deacon Whitman felt his whole soul stirred within him at the apparent kindness, but real heartlessness of the answer, and said, with warmth, "Don't you think you shall have the heart to refuse him, when his property is gone, and the prospect of pay is uncertain?" But this tart expression he seemed to regret, upon reflection; so far was anything like bitterness and tartness of feeling from the true and genuine and habitual emotions of his soul, — from those feelings which, as a matter of principle, he had carefully cherished, because he believed them to be in accordance with the true spirit of the gospel.

It will have been perceived that Deacon Whitman, in his general character, was not distinguished by any striking peculiarity. If you look at his several mental powers, you may, very probably, find many, in the same rank in life, who excelled him in some one of them. If you look at the various traits of his moral character, you may, undoubtedly, find those who surpassed him, some in one feature of character, some in another. The beauty of his character consisted in the perfect adjustment of its various parts to

each other. It was a well-balanced character. It was a character too, which, as a whole, was in perfect accordance with the circumstances in which he was placed. The ruling principle, the fashioning influence, which made his character what it was, was the power of religion. His religion was deep-seated, and all-pervading. It was based on an entire consecration of heart to the service of God, it was, then, in the first place, a heart-religion, not merely a matter of outward display, but of inward experience. It shaped the purposes of his life. He lived not for the accumulation of wealth, not for the enjoyment of honor or pleasure. He lived for duty and holiness, for God and heaven. With him it was a matter of very little consequence, whether a man were rich or poor; the great question was, whether he was in spiritual health, making spiritual progress; whether he improved his circumstances of poverty or of wealth to his spiritual growth, and to the glory of God. He did not regard himself as having here any continuing city; he was looking forward to that eternal dwelling in the heavens, which is reserved for the redeemed of the Lord. And, in a spirit of perfect consistency, he was unwilling to be entangled in those things which would too strongly draw his heart to the place of his sojourn, he sought, especially and principally, to be prepared for his final home in the heavens. This religion, as it shaped the purpose of his life, controlled all his conduct. His self-consecration to the service of God was not confined to the heart, it was carried out into all the details of every-

day life. He sought, by daily devotion to duty, to present to God his body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, regarding this as his reasonable service. And the result of his course was a long continuance of joy and peace in believing. He did not often speak of his feelings, he did not tell of his raptures and strong emotions, perhaps he never experienced them, — but his whole course was one of more than ordinary uniform cheerfulness and happiness. A cheerfulness and happiness, based not only upon his own character, but also upon his confidence in and devotion to God.

CHAPTER V.

REMINISCENCES OF HIS OLD AGE.

As Deacon Whitman advanced in years, he made an arrangement with his son Alfred, for his support. The son took charge of the farm and boarded the father, leaving it optional with him to work or not, as his feelings might prompt. This arrangement contributed much to the comfort of his old age. Still, his habits of industry, early formed and long-continued, were not laid aside when it was no longer absolutely necessary that he should work. He thought that he enjoyed better health and greater happiness, to spend some portion of every day in labor, while he had strength to work. And his strength continued until some time after he was an hundred years old. He did not confine himself to work from morning till night, like one driven with a pressure of business, but labored and rested, alternately, in such proportions of time as best suited his health or convenience or pleasure. He usually labored, during the latter days of his life, about two hours in the forenoon, and about as long in

the afternoon. And this he continued to do, until after he was an hundred years of age. The rest of his time, or a considerable portion of it, he usually spent in reading, until, after the completion of his hundredth year, he lost his eyesight to such a degree that he could no longer read. After he discontinued labor, he used to walk out, or walk the room when prevented from going out, in order to secure the proper amount of profitable exercise. In his reading, he took up whatever came in his way. His choice, it is true, was, as might have been expected, strongly inclined to practical and devotional religious reading. Next to this, he was always deeply interested in the early history of our country; of the characters and struggles of the pilgrim fathers; and of the scenes of the French and Revolutionary wars. He read, with great avidity, the religious and political papers of the day, and, in this way, he kept in his mind a clear and connected idea of the state of the political world, and the condition of the christian community. The interest which he felt in the religious and political world was the interest of a spectator rather than that of a partizan. He felt that he had passed the usual length of human life, and had, during the period of his activity, faithfully endeavored to perform his whole duty. He now retired, in fact and in feeling, from the stage, and stood by, calmly awaiting his removal hence, but at the same time, watching, with lively interest, the progress of events and the state of the community. Deacon Whitman took an interest, not only in the greater and more

important events of the political and religious world, but in all the more trifling affairs of his own town and village. Until be was a hundred years old, the writer, as he visited his father once a year, could gather from him a more connected account than from almost any one else, of the movements in the political world, of the condition of the christian community, and of the various matters of mere neighborhood interest. His cherishing and keeping alive so deep an interest in whatever was going on around him, made him as it were a part of the generation then on the stage. There was in his appearance and character a singular combination. He stood before you, as a relic of the generation that had passed away, while at the same time he seemed, in feeling and interest, to belong to the present. And this peculiarity in his character was, undoubtedly, in some good degree, the cause of one of the most striking features of his old age, his distinct recollection of recent events and transactions. The memory of the aged is usually limited to the scenes of their early years. Whilst Deacon Whitman possessed this in an equal degree with others, he had also a perfectly clear and distinct remembrance of recent events. The writer of these sketches, in the junior year of his college life, carried home, for perusal during the vacation, Reid's Philosophy. Deacon Whitman, then in the eighty-ninth year of his age, took up the work, and read, with much apparent interest, that portion which relates to the *Active Powers*. The next year the writer carried home Brown's Philosophy.

He read the moral part of that work, with the same interest with which he had, the year before, read the writings of Reid. And when he had done so, he would sit down, and, in conversation, give a very correct comparative view of the two. When it is considered that these were subjects and writings foreign from his usual modes of thought, it is a strong proof of the vigor of his intellectual powers, that, at the age of ninety, he was able to retain a clear and distinct remembrance of what he had read a year before, so as to point out the particulars, both of agreement and difference, in the two authors. He could indeed go back and recall early impressions and give distinct relations of events that transpired eighty or ninety years before; but he did not give himself up to his reminiscences of the past,—he lived in the duties and enjoyments of the present. He was interested in the young, and derived pleasure from seeing them enjoy themselves. His daughter Bathsheba had several young ladies under her tuition one winter, who boarded in her father's family. They were prevented, during the winter season, from taking much exercise in the open air, and they proposed to take exercise in dancing, as a substitute. They feared, however, that the aged deacon would object to dancing in his house, even when confined to school girls, and resorted to as exercise for a short time after school each day, and stripped of all improper accompanying influences. He was asked if he was willing that they should dance. He answered that he was. "Young per-

sons," he added, "must be in motion; and it is better that the motion be regular than that it should be irregular." Thus kindly did the good old man look upon the cheerful enjoyments of the young. Indeed, benevolent feelings and kind wishes, in regard to all, constituted a pervading characteristic of his old age. Even to the last, when strangers called to see him, of whom he knew nothing, and in regard to whom, from his hardness of hearing, he could learn nothing, he often took them cordially by the hand, as they were about to leave him, and wished them well. This kindness of feeling was manifested in a variety of ways. It constituted in his character the essence of politeness. He had none of the mere forms, the outward show, parade and phraseology of politeness; but he was possessed of that inward christian courtesy, which made him tender of the comfort and happiness of everybody around him; which prompted him to do all in his power to assist others, and to avoid, in every possible way, everything which might give them trouble. Even during his active life, he would leave his mechanical or agricultural pursuits, on Mondays, to assist and relieve the females of the family in the labors of washing, by bringing the wood and water, and doing whatever of the heavy lifting might be necessary. Indeed, until very far advanced in life, until nearly or quite a hundred years old, he would not sit quietly by the fire and see a female, whether of his own family or a domestic, bring a pail of water, or lift any other heavy burden. After he lost his eyesight,

he would always feel for the box, in which he was to spit, so as to avoid giving trouble by spitting upon the floor; and when eating raisins or anything of the kind, he would not throw the stems upon the floor, but would spend some time in feeling for the box, in which to deposit them. And during the very last year of his life, when, on one occasion, he had made some extra trouble for his son's wife, he expressed his deep regret, and said to her, with tears in his eyes, "I would not make you so much trouble if I could possibly help it." In another way, was the kindness of Deacon Whitman's heart manifested. It is most generally the case that aged persons dwell with pleasure upon the past, and look with suspicion or dissatisfaction upon the present. It is common for them to regard the state of society as having grown worse rather than better since they were young. Deacon Whitman was the very reverse of this. He always contended that the general condition and character of the community were much better in his old age, than they were in his early years; that there had been an obvious and manifest improvement in the state of society. This peculiarity in his feelings may perhaps be attributed to two causes, to his naturally kind feelings, and to his living, differently from most old people, so much with the present generation, and partaking so deeply in the prevailing feelings of the community. The universality of his kind feelings and good wishes may be still further illustrated by a single anecdote. In his old age, he was told that a Universalist minister had preached,

and was to preach still further, in the school-house where he had usually sent his children to school. It would not have been strange, it would have been perfectly natural, for one so advanced, whose prejudices of childhood and convictions of mature life had all been opposed to the doctrine of Universalism, to have uttered some strong expressions of regret or of opposition. It was not so with Deacon Whitman. He calmly inquired who attended the meeting. He was told that, with some men of respectable characters, there were others of intemperate habits, who had for some time been in the practice of spending their Sundays at home with their bottles. He immediately answered, that he hoped that good would come of it; for, in regard to the latter class, it was a great improvement upon their previous mode of spending the Sabbath, to brush up, put on clean clothes, and go where the Bible was read and prayers were offered; and he had no doubt but they might be profited by the preaching, if they would attend to it, even though it might not in all things be in accordance with what he regarded as the truth.

Deacon Whitman seemed to be less childish, and to have a more full exercise of his reason and judgment than most old people. He was always pleasant, and apparently satisfied with what was done for him, never peevish and fretful. And although he would have rejoiced to have seen his children often, yet, as they were scattered abroad, and lived at a distance from him, and he knew that it would be difficult for them to meet the expense of frequent

journeys, he seemed to take a fair and reasonable view of the case. He reminded them of the duty to their families in this respect, and then added, that when they could visit him, with propriety, he should be glad to see them; but if they should not visit him, he should conclude that they had a good reason for not coming.

It was extremely interesting and pleasant to observe, in Deacon Whitman's old age, and amid his decaying powers, the force of religious habits. He had long recognized the goodness of God in the supply of his daily returning wants, and had manifested this recognition, by lifting up his heart to God in gratitude and supplication at each returning meal. It had become with him a matter of habit, as well as of feeling, to lift up his heart to God the giver, before partaking of the gifts of his bounty. After he had passed his hundredth year, and had become somewhat enfeebled, it was more convenient for him and for the family that he should take his meals by himself, upon a small table moved up to him as he sat in his arm chair. But as long as he was able to take his meals in this way, until within a short time of his death, the habit of asking a blessing, of recognizing the hand of God in the supply of his wants, retained its force. When the table was placed before him, he would pause some time before partaking, and by the attitude he assumed, and the expression of his countenance, showed that he was engaged in mental devotions, was still, as his custom had been, lifting up his heart to God in gratitude and supplication. Never

was he so far overcome by his desire for the food that was before him,— never was he so far lost, or wandering in his mind, as to forget or neglect this. So, too, when his son's family were assembled at night and morning, as was their custom, for reading the scriptures and prayer, although he was so hard of hearing as not to be able to understand what was said, yet he always assumed an attentive and devout appearance. He thus manifested his regard for the worship that was offered by his son, while he was probably offering up, in his own mind, the devout aspirations of his own soul. He continued, as long as he was able, to recognize and observe, in his own peculiar way, the return of the sabbath. On that day, as it returned, he would, after breakfast, and about the time he had been accustomed to dress for public worship, change his whole dress, and then sit down and pass the day in an apparently very quiet and devout manner. These may seem to be but trifles, scarcely worthy of notice. They are not mentioned as matters of great importance, but as tending to show the influence of early-formed and long-continued practices upon the character and feelings of old age, and as indications of the state of his mind in his advanced years. Let it not be thought that these were mere observances of forms, by one whose mind had become almost idiotic. Deacon Whitman was, even in these advanced years, possessed of sound sense, and undoubtedly rendered in these ways sincere and acceptable worship. His worship was mental, consisting in the breathings of

the heart and not in the utterances of the lips. But, at one time, during the very last years of his life, he complained to his daughter of the difficulty he found in keeping his thoughts at all times in a right frame. This complaint had reference, it is presumed, to those long hours, which, as he could not read and had but little conversation with any one, he was compelled to pass, day after day, with no companions but his own thoughts. But the very fact, that he desired and endeavored to keep his thoughts in a religious frame, affords the presumption, at least, that, by the change of dress on the sabbath, he was seeking assistance in his endeavors to worship God in spirit and in truth. He distinguished the day from the other days in the week. He seemed to set it apart from ordinary time, to high and holy uses. And, by the clothing of the body which he assumed, he seemed to express the feeling, that he was about to engage in higher and purer employments, and to enter the society of one he revered. It may be, that from long-continued practice and confirmed habit, his devotional feelings were awakened, and his thoughts ran more freely in religious channels, in consequence of the change he had made in his garb. It may have been the case, that, in morning and evening prayers, his own heart was more fully attuned to devotion, and his heavenward aspirations were aided by the sight of his son, as he took the Bible and read, as he assumed the attitude of devotion, even though he could not hear the words which he pronounced. At least, it was pleasing to his friends to see him the same devout and

prayerful man, in the feebleness of age, which he had been in the maturity of manhood.

Deacon Whitman ever manifested perfect confidence in those who had the care of him. This confidence was well placed. His son Alfred was faithful to his undertaking and to his duty as a son. He buried one wife, and married another, during the period in which he had the care of his father. And his wives were both very much devoted to the comfort and happiness of the old man. During the two or three last years of his life, he had occasional spells of being very nervous and somewhat wandering in mind. For a night or two he would sleep scarcely any, and during the day would talk more than usual. Sometimes, he would walk farther than he was wont from the house, seemingly lost, and must be led back. When he passed from these spells to a more quiet state, he would seem exhausted in strength. But even during the continuance of this mental aberration he was, in many respects, the same in character as when more calm. He would sometimes say to his son, as he was retiring for the night, that his head felt badly, and that he feared he should be wandering in mind before morning. But if I am, he would add, just speak to me and I shall know your voice, and follow your directions. And so it was, always, even during his most excited seasons, he would recognize the voice and regard the directions of his son. And it was much the same in regard to the son's wife. If he understood her directions, whether expressed by the voice or by signs,

he promptly and readily followed them. He ever seemed to wish to avoid, if possible, giving unnecessary trouble. He had none of the obstinacy so common with the aged, in regard to his own way; but was willing to conform to any arrangement which would be most convenient to the family of the son. It is not intended to intimate, that Deacon Whitman was no trouble in his old age; it could not be, but that one so advanced should be the cause of some, and trouble, too, which none but those who have had the care of the aged can know. But it is intended to leave the impression, as the true one, that he gave very much less trouble than the aged usually do. He caused none, but such as was absolutely unavoidable. And then his desire to avoid giving any, his willingness to conform to any plan or arrangement which might suit the family, and his gratitude for everything that was done for him, made the care of him, great as it was, and which otherwise would have been a wearing task, a source of pleasure.

On the night of the 19th of July, 1842, Deacon Whitman died. He had been gradually losing strength, and apparently failing, for a month or six weeks. He seemed to be aware of his situation, for he said, a short time before his death, that he should not probably live much longer. Death had no terrors for him. He regarded it in the light of a friend sent to summon him to a higher and better world. He sometimes seemed to long to depart. And had he not accustomed himself to repress all feelings which

had the appearance of selfishness, he might have cherished these ardent longings for a release from the clogs of earth. But with him, God's will was all in all. His common language upon the subject, therefore, as he drew near the close of his life, was, that he had no will of his own. He was willing to stay or to depart, as might best please his heavenly Father. He was confined to his bed but a few days,—and he sat up to have his bed made in the forenoon of the day on which, in the evening, he died. He passed away so quietly that none could tell the precise moment of his departure. His son Alfred was himself sick, and died within a fortnight of his father. His son Josiah, who had removed to Bridgewater a year or two before, and a grandson, E. B. Whitman of Cambridge, were with him. His grandson had given him a few drops of molasses and water, and then passed across an intervening room to that in which his father was sick. He noticed, in a moment, that no sound of breathing came from his grandfather. He stepped back to look at him, and found that he had ceased to breathe. He died of no apparent disease. The energies of his nature were exhausted, and the whole appearance was like the expiring of the lamp from the exhaustion of oil. There was no convulsion, no struggle. The spirit had occupied the tenement of clay until it was worn out,—and then, it quietly took its departure, and passed to the world above.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

I HAVE endeavored, in the preceding chapters, to give my readers a connected view of the life and character of one, who may be truly called a *Christian* Patriarch. There are many things in the character of Deacon Whitman worthy of careful notice, —many things, in regard to which, he may be safely recommended to the imitation of the community, especially to the imitation of that large and important class of the community, those in the middle condition in life, to which he himself belonged. I might have closed my labors with the close of the last chapter, but I have been prompted to trespass still further upon the attention and patience of my readers, while I offer, in conclusion, those practical suggestions, which have been awakened in my own mind, as I have dwelt upon the character I have endeavored to portray.

I have felt, as I have passed in review the life of my revered father, deeply impressed with the thought, that, even in his old age, he was inclined to attribute

much of what he had been in character, and much of what he had enjoyed in life, to his early religious training. May we not gather from this circumstance a hint, in regard to the importance of parental efforts in the religious education of their children. I am aware that much is said in regard to the importance of early religious training. And yet, if we look the community through, we shall find, I think, this to be the precise point where parents are most in fault. They do not feel, as deeply as they should, the importance of the religious education of their children. It is true that most parents do admit that it is a matter of importance. But they do not feel that it is the first, the most important, the all-essential thing in regard to the training of their children. And yet it is even so. If the maintenance of christian character, and the enjoyment of religious peace, be of any importance whatever, then, most surely, they are of the utmost importance. If we look only at this life, is not a religious character, with the happiness resulting from it, of vastly more importance than any outward condition we may secure, or any worldly possession we may gain? What is wealth — what is honor — what is knowledge even — when weighed in the balance with christian character? Who, in selecting for a son, would not choose the latter in preference to either or all the former? Who would not prefer that his son should be trained to the maintenance of a christian character, rather than that he should be secured in the possession of wealth, honor or learning? If, then, we look only at the char-

acters our children shall maintain, and the happiness they shall enjoy in this life, is it not of the utmost importance that they should be religiously educated. But this is a very narrow view of the subject. These, our children, are spiritual beings, destined to a never-ending existence beyond the grave. And the condition of the future life is most closely linked with the conduct of the present. When we take this view of the subject, and consider, too, that the character of the present life is very seriously affected, if not in a great degree determined by the influences of early education, no words are sufficient to express the vast, the almost inconceivable importance of early religious training. Should our children be spared to us, to grow up and take their places in society, should they be permitted to spend a long life on earth, they will bless our names, while they live, for our devotion to their religious education. Should they be taken from us, by an early death, still our efforts may be instrumental in sowing some seed, which may spring up unto life everlasting in the spiritual world.

Deacon Whitman, as he drew near the close of his life and looked back over the long way he had travelled, was moved to speak with deep and heartfelt gratitude of the religious influences with which he was blessed in early life. He has now passed, we trust, to the enjoyment of heavenly blessings. May he not, even in the mansions of Glory, as he traces back the felicity he enjoys through his christian character, to early religious impressions, be giv-

ing God thanks that he was blessed with religious parents, who faithfully endeavored to train him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. As he joins in songs of glory to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb, may he not mingle in these songs expressions of gratitude and praise for those parents, who early dedicated him to God, and introduced him to the acquaintance and discipleship of Jesus, the Son of God. I would cherish the hope, then, that the imperfect sketches, I have given, may be instrumental in awakening the attention of those who may read them, to a deeper sense of the importance of an earnest devotion to the religious education of their children.

A second practical lesson, which we learn from the character of Deacon Whitman, relates to the importance of individual conscience. And it is a lesson well adapted to the present state of the times, the present condition of the community. There is a great want of religious principle, as an individual and personal possession. Men are prone to shape their conduct, not so much by the plain instructions of God's word, not so much even by any fixed principles which they may themselves form, as by the maxims and practices and fashions of the community in which they dwell. They often pursue courses of conduct, not because they believe them to be right, but because they are courses which will not be condemned, which may even be approved by the community around them. We see those, who in a temperance community are good temperance men, but

who, upon removing into a community where wine drinking is the fashion, will drink their wine. In this they show their want of fixed principle, their want of adherence to the decisions of an enlightened individual conscience. What we need is, that our young men, as they come forward upon the stage of responsible action, our active men as they engage in carrying forward the business of life, and indeed all, in every relation, should take the Bible, and, studying it for themselves, should form from it fixed principles of conduct, — should determine, each one for himself, what courses of conduct it would be right and what it would be wrong for them to pursue, and state distinctly to their own minds their reasons for the principles they adopt. Then will each man know his own principles; then will he have a conscience of his own, enlightened by God's word, and guided in all its decisions by eternal truth. His conscience will not be merely a reflection of the general conscience of the community in which he dwells. Such a conscience, an individual conscience, had Deacon Whitman, and through his long life, he was unswerving in his devotion to it. But what is the advantage of this devotion to individual conscience? It gives great increase of moral strength. The standard of conduct with such an one is God's eternal truth, the simple question in regard to any proposed course of conduct will be, is it right? This question is generally very easily determined, there is none of the perplexity of endeavoring to determine what course may be expedient. And when the

question of right is once determined, — the decision of the will, the determination of purpose is immediate and satisfactory. Satisfactory, for the moment an individual has determined to do what he conscientiously believes to be right, he will enjoy the strengthening influences of an approving conscience. If he has only determined to do what he deems expedient, he will be continually harassed by weakening doubts, lest the course he has determined upon should not prove in the end to be the most expedient. But this unwavering adherence to the decisions of individual conscience also gives strength in withstanding temptations. Let such an one be assailed by companions, soliciting him to evil, and all excuses based upon expediency will only make them more urgent in their solicitations. But the bare statement that he cannot, in conscience, yield, will disarm and silence them at once. Still further, this unwavering devotion to individual conscience will promote happiness and secure respect. Are you frowned upon for the course you have pursued, still you have inward peace, you enjoy the approving smiles of your own conscience, you are sustained by the hope of the approving smile of your God. You have proved your own work, and have proved it by a true and right standard, and, consequently, you have rejoicing in yourself alone, and not in another. Then, too, it is devotion to principle, to conscience, that secures respect. We may admire genius, talents, intellectual greatness, but we respect principle. Let a man's talents be as great as they may, if there be not also principle, there is

mingled with our admiration much fear. But let there be principle and an unswerving devotion to the decisions of conscience, and, though the man may move in the ordinary walks of life, and may not be blessed with great talents, his character will be respected. The life of Deacon John Whitman, then, teaches all, and especially all in the ordinary walks of life, the way in which they may secure great moral strength, — deep, calm, and enduring inward peace, and universal outward respect. They need not be discontented with their condition in life. They need not seek to go out of that condition or to rise above it, they have only to draw their rules of duty from the word of God, and to cherish and manifest an unwavering devotion to the decisions of their individual consciences.

A third practical lesson gathered from the character that has been sketched, relates to the importance of christian charity. There was never, perhaps, a higher and more consistent example of this than Deacon Whitman. An example of this uniform and consistent, charitable judging was never more needed than at the present time. We live in a day of bitterness and exclusion. We witness among christians of different denominations a course of mutual crimination and recrimination. This denomination has embraced too many doctrines, has added to the word of God, and that has curtailed, has embraced too few. And consequently the professedly christian world presents a scene of discord and contention. Not only so, but the zealous in each denomination feel

that their duty to God and the Saviour requires them to condemn and denounce those who may differ from them. They see not how they can be faithful to their own views of christian truth, without this. It is delightful, therefore, to turn aside from all this dispute and contention, and dwell, for a time, upon the character of one, who, through a long life, and amid the warmest disputes and contentions going on around him, maintained a uniform and consistent devotion to his own principles, to his own views of christian doctrine, while, at the same time, he was equally uniform and consistent in his enlarged charity towards others. And this is the only true ground of christian harmony. There have been attempts of late years to bring about a greater degree of christian union. But the attempts have been based upon sectarian principle and feeling — it is to be a union of certain sects in order to secure increased power of opposition to other sects. Such a union will never be lasting. We should aim at securing christian harmony. And this can be secured only in the way which Deacon Whitman pursued. Let each individual form his own opinions, and have his own faith to himself before God, and cherish a perfect willingness that others should do the same. Let each treat those who differ from him as he would wish to be treated by them, and there need be no bitterness and contention amid our differences of opinion. Indeed, if there be true humility — a trait of character for which Deacon Whitman was distinguished, and the value of which is not sufficiently felt

in the community — if there be humility, there will not be bitter contention. Paul has said that divisions are proof of a carnal mind. Our own daily observation will teach us that they are clear indications of a want of proper christian humility. For humility is the cementing element of the christian community. No matter how firm and decided a man may be in his own opinions, if, in the true spirit of humility, he feels his own liability to error, he will not harshly condemn those who may differ from him. I would hope that the sketch I have given of one, who was no less remarkable for his charity to others than for his firm adherence to his own views, may not be without its influence, in promoting a state of peace and harmony in the christian community.

A fourth practical lesson taught in the life of the subject of these sketches, relates to the importance of a correct view of the true object of life. Deacon Whitman felt himself to be but a pilgrim and a sojourner upon the earth, he looked forward to a more enduring habitation in the heavens. He felt, therefore, that the true object of life should have reference to his most enduring interests, to the interests of the soul and of eternity. He felt, too, that if he were laying up treasures, it would be important to secure those, which might be long enjoyed, rather than those which might easily be lost and must soon be left behind. With Deacon Whitman, therefore, the object of life was the cultivation of the spirit, the formation and maintenance of a religious character, the preparation for spiritual joys beyond the

grave. In the pursuit of this object he was rational and consistent. He was industrious and economical; not so much because he hoped by these means to acquire wealth, as because he regarded them as christian duties, by the right performance of which he could contribute something to his spiritual improvement. He was content to pass through life in moderate circumstances as to property, not that he was indifferent to the possession of wealth, had God seen fit to bestow it, but because he felt that all the allotments of God's Providence were wise and merciful. Nor did he look with envy upon those more blessed in this respect than himself. He felt that with the increase of riches there is also an increase of responsibility. He never spoke of his fellow men as doing well in life if all that could be said of them was that they were accumulating riches. He would ask for their character, and if that was improving, he felt that the great object of life was in a course of accomplishment in regard to them. This view of the true object of life, derived originally from the instructions of Jesus, gave to the precepts of the gospel a more decided and universal control over the conduct. Spiritual improvement being the object of life, in all its various trials and duties, the word of God becomes at once the universal standard of conduct. And is not the trait of character, here noticed, one, which is much needed in the community. Look where you will, and you find much feverish anxiety, much restlessness and uneasiness. Those in the more ordinary walks of life are panting for distinction; those

in more indigent circumstances are striving for wealth. The great mass, not contented with their condition as it is, are seeking for some change. And the reason of this is, that they mistake the true objects of life. They are not living for the future, for the spirit, for God. They are living for the present, for some temporary good, the pursuit of which is wearisome, and the enjoyment of which is uncertain. The result of this course is constant agitation, constant disappointment. And he, who best succeeds in securing these objects, will be compelled at the close of life to exclaim with the wise man of old, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." But he who has obtained a correct view of the true object of life, will be saved from many anxieties and many disappointments. All the disappointments he may experience in regard to this life, will not reach nor endanger the one supreme object for the attainment of which he lives. Is he prosperous, he seeks to make his prosperity instrumental of his spiritual improvement. Is he visited with adversity, he seeks so to improve his adversity that it may aid him in making still higher attainments in the christian virtues and graces; and consequently to him who loves God and lives for God, all things work together for good. The changes of this life do not disturb his soul, for he can extract from them all some good; and when the last final change shall arrive, the change which is to usher him into the spiritual world, he is still calm, his whole life has been one continued course of preparation for that

change; and he has treasures laid up in that spiritual world, in regard to the value and permanency of which he has no fears of disappointment.

There never, perhaps, was an individual who, to use a common and perhaps *cant* phrase, enjoyed religion more highly and more uniformly than Deacon Whitman. His enjoyment consisted not in ecstasies and raptures, but in calm and serene cheerfulness. He could, with as much truth as almost any one, say with the apostle, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Nor was his enjoyment of religion any thing strange. It was the natural result of his christian character. His religion was a heart religion; it was based upon faith, and not dependent upon sight; it was universal in its control. It governed all his desires and feelings and motives; all, both within and without, were brought into some humble degree of subjection to Christ, and consequently, there was none of the unhappiness experienced by many, arising from the conflicting elements of the character. Then too, his views were all calculated to give peace. He looked to God as his father, ever filled with love. He had an unwavering confidence in the wisdom and goodness of God's overruling providence. He felt that all things were ordered for the best. He trusted that if he was faithful to that Saviour, who had given himself a sacrifice upon the cross for his deliverance from sin, he would keep what he had committed to his care — would be to him an all-sufficient Saviour. There was a singleness of purpose, too, in his devotion to truth and

duty, which contributed much to his enjoyment of religion. But as his enjoyment of religion was nothing strange, — was the result of his christian character, his life adds one more to the many testimonials we have already had, that the way of the righteous shall be hedged about by the Lord, and that peace shall be in his paths. And most delightful was it to witness the peace and happiness, which, as the result of his previous christian character, he enjoyed during the years of aged feebleness, when most are fretful, discontented and unhappy. In the life of Deacon Whitman, and especially in the happiness of its latter years, we see verified the declaration of the wise man — "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." God grant that the example, which in these pages has been exhibited, may exert its appropriate influence upon the hearts of all who become acquainted with it, and thereby may the Christian Patriarch, though dead, still speak to us.

THE END.